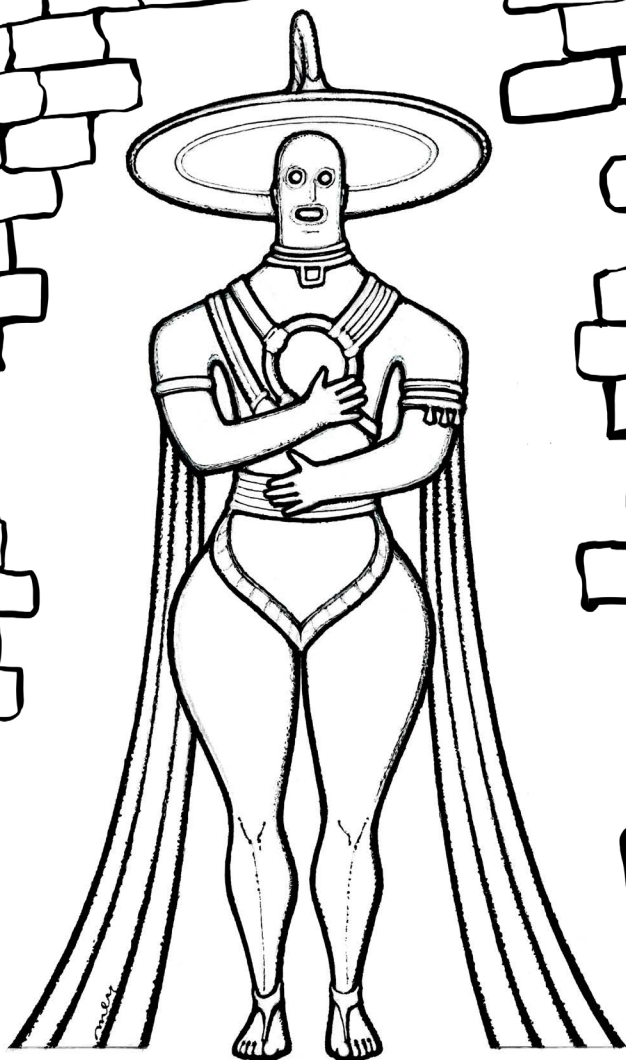


Bitta MANIFESTO



Bitta Manifesto

Best practices, methodologies, reflections, comparisons, free thoughts on how to use art as a tool for inclusion and active involvement of young people.

Erasmus+ Youth Seminar "Artistic Expression to facilitate youth inclusion processes" – Chieti (Italy) 18th – 24th November 2024

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COMUNE DI CHIETI

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2025

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Thank you!

Bitta MANIFESTO

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INTRODUCTION in ENG/IT

Artistic processes are among the most popular ways for young people to express their desires and ideas, and are increasingly identified as the tools they use to interact with society, their contexts and other peers. For this reason, it is important to initiate and consolidate paths of inclusion and reflection on their social role through art and culture that allow these young people to freely express their real needs, imagine future prospects and promote better lifestyles. The main objective is to involve young people through the use of artistic and creative tools linked to various aspects of everyday life (sustainable development, rights, mobility, interculturalism, social spaces, traditions, historical and cultural heritage) so as to increase processes of social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development and that of the communities in which they live.

The Seminar 'Artistic Expression to Facilitate Youth Inclusion Processes' took place in Chieti (Abruzzo, Italy) from 18th to 24th November 2024 thanks to an Erasmus+ Youth grant from the Agenzia Italiana per la Gioventù. The participants in the Chieti Seminar were 22 among artists, educators, youth workers, volunteers from Italy, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, France, Portugal, Bulgaria and Germany.

The main objective of the Seminar was to share good practices implemented in the different local levels of the European partners on the use of artistic expressiveness as a tool to facilitate processes of social inclusion and active citizenship of young people. On the basis of the results of this sharing and considering the previous meetings already realised since 2009 by the informal network 'Bitta Generation' on these issues, the Seminar participants established a methodological platform, or rather a real 'Manifesto' on the topic of youth inclusion through artistic expressiveness.

With this publication, we intend precisely to share the results of these reflections of ours so that Bitta Manifesto can be a useful tool both for our future projects and for those who wish to initiate paths of inclusion and active involvement of young people through artistic expression.

Happy reading.

I processi artistici sono tra le modalità più diffuse tra i giovani per esprimere i propri desideri e le proprie idee, e sono sempre più identificati come gli strumenti che utilizzano per interagire con la società, i propri contesti e gli altri coetanei. Per questo motivo, è importante avviare e consolidare percorsi di inclusione e di riflessione sul proprio ruolo sociale attraverso l'arte e la cultura che permettano a questi giovani di esprimere liberamente i propri bisogni reali, immaginare prospettive future e promuovere stili di vita migliori. L'obiettivo principale è quello di coinvolgere i giovani attraverso l'utilizzo di strumenti artistici e creativi collegati a vari aspetti del vivere quotidiano (sviluppo sostenibile, diritti, mobilità, intercultura, spazi di socialità, tradizioni, patrimonio storico- culturale) così da incrementare processi di inclusione sociale, di cittadinanza attiva e di sviluppo personale e delle comunità in cui vivono.

Il Seminario "Artistic Expression to facilitate youth inclusion processes" ha avuto luogo a Chieti dal 18 al 24 novembre 2024 grazie ad un finanziamento Erasmus+ Youth concesso dall'Agenzia Nazionale per la Gioventù. I partecipanti al Seminario di Chieti sono stati 22 artisti, educatori, operatori giovanili, volontari provenienti da Italia, Belgio, Bosnia Erzegovina, Serbia, Francia, Portogallo, Bulgaria e Germania.

Obiettivo principale del Seminario è stato quello di condividere buone prassi realizzate nei differenti livelli locali dei partner europei sull'uso dell'espressività artistica come strumento per facilitare processi di inclusione sociale e di cittadinanza attiva dei giovani. Sui risultati di questo sharing e considerando i precedenti incontri già realizzati a partire dal 2009 dal network informale "Bitta Generation" su queste tematiche, i partecipanti al Seminario hanno stabilito una piattaforma metodologica, o meglio, un vero e proprio "Manifesto" sul tema dell'inclusione giovanile attraverso l'espressività artistica.

Con questa pubblicazione, intendiamo proprio condividere i risultati di queste nostre riflessioni per fare in modo che Bitta Manifesto possa essere uno strumento utile sia per i nostri futuri progetti e sia per chi vorrà avviare percorsi di inclusione e di coinvolgimento attivo dei giovani attraverso l'espressività artistica.

Buona lettura.

CASE STUDIES

Within the preparation for the Seminar and in order to share different backgrounds and activities from the partners and the countries involved, participants collected and organised information and documentation on examples of Projects, Activities, Campaigns carried out by associations in which art has been used as a tool for youth participation and inclusion in different fields of the daily life (social, cultural, environmental, human rights, etc.). In order to have an efficient preparatory process, a dedicated form has been created to serve as a guideline for the information to be researched and shared in a homogeneous way. During the first working days of the Seminar in Chieti, all Case Studies were shared during a specific working session. Moreover, all of them are published in this book in order to be available to those who are interested in knowing them and, hopefully, to take inspiration to realise new and innovative activities in using art as a tool to facilitate processes of social inclusion and active involvement of young people and especially those coming from disadvantaged conditions.

Association for improvement of culture "Elektrika" (Serbia)

Participative mural painting

Short introduction of the initiative:

Participative painting of murals

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2018-2024/ongoing/

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Youth Centre

Street and/or outdoor

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

10-20

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

30

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Opening the call for participation

Educational/resserch input by experts about the history and techniques of street art

Facilitated process of designing the sketch through dialogue and exchange of drawings

Obtaining all the permissions by all stakeholders concerned

Painting/implementation

Promotion of the results through soicial mmedia and vifeo

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

Local school for children with specific needs "Mara Mandić" Pancevo

Institution for children without parents "Spomenak", Pancevo, Serbia

Ministry of culture of Republic of Serbia

NKSS – network of independent cultural scene of Serbia /Festival Na

Sopstveni Pogon - Self-propelled Festival/

Heinrich Boell Foundation Office Belgrade

UNESCO

Neighborhood councils

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

Murals

Video documentation aftermovies,

Raised capacities of participants in terms of ownership over the public space, as well as in terms of non violent constructive communication in non formal horizontal context;

Increased quality of common living space through aesthetic optimization

List of eventual attached files:

Please check video documentation at following links:

<https://youtu.be/qRh7RzeZACE?si=Tz3xRtIZE0zIMjS0>

<https://youtu.be/hkb0x6hZsfA?si=gsHomxVxVRbErr-b>



Habitus (Serbia)

Nikola Vukovic

Short introduction of the initiative:

Habitus is an informal group that creates art, music, and design events in the local scene of Pančevo.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2022

Duration:

3 years

Target group:

Young people of Pančevo. 16-35 years

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Street and/or outdoor, NGOs structure, Urban area

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

4

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

10

Ojectives/goals:

- creating contemporary multimedia content for young people
- involve young people and support and promote their creativity
- creating alternative high quality and inclusive art program

- activating alternative spaces for art projects

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Plan, organise and produce events.

Exhibitions, music events, interactive installations, public guerilla art interventions.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

Local Fondation Pančevo, Sinhro Hub, Bar Štab Pogon. Young professional youth workers.

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

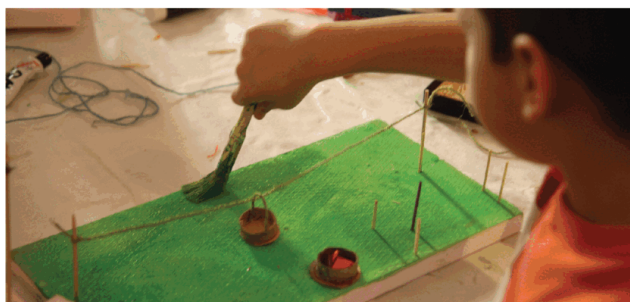
- offering new, experimental and provocative art content
- dynamic and lively art scene of young people

Instagram link where you can see all our activities in the past 3 years.

@habitus.hbts



SPACES OF CHANGE ART PROJECT
HABITUS Group
Pančevo, Serbia 2023



The Pink Flamingo partner of RAS (France)

Festival Planete Peripherique

Short introduction of the initiative:

A street art festival that aims to mark the end of a chapter in the history of one of the poorest neighborhoods in Paris, Python-Duvernois. This district is undergoing a major urban transformation. Within the framework of the massif architectural project, a building of over 3,000 m², scheduled for demolition, has been completely taken over by a hundred artists. A one month event offering street art, live painting, DJ sets, theatre, as well as world cuisine stands. The artists, with the participation of former and last residents of the neighborhood, meet up to celebrate and pay tribute to the history of the neighborhood and its inhabitants, sharing with outsiders the joy of a popular way of living.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2023

Duration:

From the 13th of April to the 7th of May 2023

Target group:

First target group: last 2000 residents of the neighborhood

Large target group: 15000 visitors, of all age, social and cultural backgrounds

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Street and/or outdoor, Urban area

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers en-

gaged:

100 artists, 30 volunteers, 10 organisers

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

25% of the artists involved in the project where young emerging artists

90 students from near by schools have benefited of private guided tours outside the

normal opening hours

300 youngsters from the neighborhood participated in the event

45-55% of the public were under 30 years (some 7000 visitors)

Ojectives/goals:

FPP promote equal opportunities through social change.

Guided tours for young children in the neighborhood have allowed them to interact with artists about art and urban culture. This type of activity not only educates these young people about the history of art but also invites and encourages these young people in the neighborhood to practice art and find, in this way, new forms of creative and constructive expression

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

One month of in situ non-stop work to create immersive artworks in the 3000m2 building.

One month opening to the public with live painting, guided tours, dj set, theatre, jams and open mic, food stands.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

RAS, RIVP, Mairship of 20th arrondissement of Paris, Mairship of Paris, and other local associations (Môm Ganne, La Fabrique Documentaire, La Lucarne, Les Régisses)

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

15000 visitors

Roter Baum Berlin (Germany)

Respekt und Neugier Festival

Short introduction of the initiative:

Improvement and support of the festival by international participants/ artist in local context of the festival and involvement of group into the preparatory work through their artistic vision

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2021

Duration:

30 days

Target group:

Local community in the district

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

32

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

32

Objectives/goals:

The objectives were to work and create, with the local community in the district, to help the organization improve the festival and personal development of each artist.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

- Dividing participants in teams by interest and field of work, such as: Media Team, Art & Decoration, Content
- Working in groups and preparing for the festival (sculpturing, painting and managing social media)
- Setting up the artworks, implementation of preparatory work and documenting

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

Partner organisations: Agoraveiro (Portugal), Udruženje Crveno Drvo (Serbia)

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

Several walls of youth center painted with murals, sculptures made for the festival were later integrated into the space of the youth center and became part of it, different workshops included directly involving participants with visitors and their creative process.



"Zdravo da ste" / "Hi Neighbour" (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

"Kreativni avgust" / "Creative August"

Short introduction of the initiative:

The citizens' association "Zdravo da ste" implements the "Creative August" Festival which presents a number of different creative workshops led by young artists.

All contents of the Festival program are free and intended for everyone who wants to spend their free time in a creative and interesting way, acquiring new skills and developing personal talents.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

Every year since 2004.

Duration:

2 weeks each august

Target group:

It is both for the young people and kids who participate in the creative activities but it also aims to provide young people and volunteers within organisation with proper management skills.

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Youth Centre, Street and/or outdoor, Nature Reserve/Parks

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

15-20

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

250-300

Objectives/goals:

The goal is to increase the participation and engagement of children and young people through the promotion of positive values and creative expression through the creation, organization and implementation of daily content and activities for children and young people by young people.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Two weeks of creative workshops such as guitar, drums, photography, dance, comics, drawing and painting, graffiti... The project aims to increase the participation and engagement of young people by promoting positive values and encouraging creative expression. This will be achieved through the design, organization, and implementation of daily activities and programs led by young people themselves, benefiting both children and youth.

Specific Objectives:

We facilitate creative use of social and public spaces and mobilize community involvement, as well as remote volunteerism and youth activism.

We organize quality free-time activities that support creative expression, personal development, and youth initiatives.

Volunteer support will be integral, as volunteers will assist workshop leaders in carrying out daily activities. In Banja Luka, many young people often begin their volunteer journey through the Creative August program.

Through this initiative, a large number of young people will come together, gaining valuable skills and knowledge that they can carry forward into their future endeavors.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

City of Banja Luka (this year), previous Institut za razvoj mladih KULT, IOM, UNDP..

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

Creative skills acquired by kids and young people through different creative workshops.

Management and experience acquired by young people organising it.

Youth Center "Les Recollets" (Belgium)

Dire Nous (Saying Us)

Short introduction of the initiative:

The "Dire Nous" project emerged in a context where many young people, faced with growing social and economic challenges, felt a lack of inclusion and recognition in society. The goal of this initiative was to offer young people a means of expression and creativity, allowing them to make their voices heard while increasing their understanding of human rights, particularly through art. In response to issues such as intolerance, xenophobia, and marginalization, "Dire Nous" sought to create a space for exchange and reflection, where young people could discuss essential topics like equality, dignity, and inclusion through different expression workshops.

*The project also sought to promote a positive message around the city of Verviers and its residents by combating discrimination and fostering social cohesion. Concretely, this was realized through the creation of six murals in different locations around Verviers. These were created by international and local artists (Jon Bovi Crew). The murals incorporate passages from the book *Dire Nous* by Edwy Plenel, a journalist who explores in his work the emergency of building a collective and inclusive approach, encouraging the shift from individual thinking to a shared "we."*

These murals visually and literally illustrate the commitment of the city and its young people to reinforce solidarity and social inclusion, while celebrating the project's core values of diversity and well-being.

In addition, the murals have also become educational tools for reflection and engagement with classes from Verviers schools. The Youth Center organizes mural tours for those groups and creates activities around the role of art in public spaces, art as a means of expression, debates, the common thread together with the "Dire Nous" project as the main theme.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2023

Duration:

5 years

Target group:

Young people and community of Verviers

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Youth center, Street and/or outdoor, Urban area

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

Six International artists, the team from the youth center, a few workers from the municipality for the preparatory work

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

300 young people were engaged with the theme. This included youth from the different neighborhoods where the murals were created, as well as those who frequented the youth center during their creation and all the secondary school classes in Verviers that we received for a tour of the murals, along with activities/workshops for expression and reflection based on them.

Objectives/goals:

Promote a positive image of Verviers and its residents.

Combat discrimination, racism, and xenophobia through art.

Encourage artistic expression among young people as a tool for integration and social cohesion.

Highlight Verviers' identity and support local pride.

Create a space for dialogue and expression for young people to share their needs, visions, and ideas.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Phase 1: The project began with a phase of raising awareness about human rights. Several international exchanges helped develop this creative approach and fuel the reflection of the young participants. Through these meetings, the young people were encouraged to explore issues related to equality, dignity, and inclusion. These exchanges fostered the emergence of ideas and highlighted the importance of artistic expression as a means of combating intolerance and marginalization.

Phase 2: The second phase consisted of requesting the city's support and introducing the sketches to get the authorizations for the creation of the murals. After receiving approval from the authorities, the first mural was created, followed by five more in different neighborhoods around the city of Verviers. Each mural represents a key element of the project and contributes to reinforcing the message of inclusion and social cohesion.

Phase 3: The third phase was marked by the inauguration of one of the last mural Edwy Plenel and the local community. This event highlighted the importance of citizen involvement in the project and provided an opportunity to collectively celebrate the values of solidarity, acceptance of diversity, and inclusion promoted by the "Dire Nous" project. It was also a moment of exchange between young people, local community, and guests, further strengthening the engagement between the community and the artwork.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

- BIJ (Bureau International Jeunesse)
- CRVI
- Centre Culturel de Verviers
- Young people from the youth center and other local volunteers.

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

- Creation of 6 murals
- Increased visibility of Verviers as a city committed to social inclusion and community-building.
- Empowerment of local youth through participation in artistic expression.
- Strengthened local identity and pride in Verviers through public art.



Ryan Sprout PhD, Cardiff University UK
(Bulgaria)

All Is Not Well 3.0

Short introduction of the initiative:

"All Is Not Well" 3.0 is a research project with additional artistic dimension of Cardiff University and Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". The project included two main phases:

– a research phase, in which three social science workers interviewed people with disabilities and parents and caregivers of children with disabilities and formulated a manifesto for change for the community

– a public phase, in which the results of the project were presented in a series of public events: a round table with social science workers, activists and people of the community; a theatre performance of the youth theatre group for inclusivity "Phoenix Junior"; and an art exhibition by six artists, who created visual works based on parts of the interviews made during the research phase.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2023/2024

Duration:

A year (the project is a spin-off continuation of a previous one).

Target group:

The general public and the disability communities in Varna and Sofia

Location:

Institution of Formal Education

Other (please specify): Art Gallery and Theatre

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

Six artists worked on the visual part of the project.

Number of young people that attended the initiative:

The art exhibition was open for the general public for two weeks in the spring of 2024, which included the European night of museums and galleries, so many young people attended.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Each of the artists (me among them) worked independently on the texts for about three months. The exhibition consisted of 12 tableaux, presenting different approaches and techniques – drawings, comics, photography, collages etc. Besides the tableaux we made an installation with quotes of the interviews on the gallery showcase window.

Ojectives/goals:

The goal of the whole project was to raise visibility on the life of the people with disabilities and their caregivers in Bulgaria and on the issues that they are facing.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

Donors: Cardiff University UK, Arts and Humanities Research Council UK

Partners: Youth Theatre Group "Phoenix Junior" – Varna, Centre for Independent Life – Sofia, Association for People with Disabilities "Breeze" – Varna, Bistro "Academica" – Varna, Parallel World – Plovdiv, Association "Family Centre – Maria" – Varna

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

The exhibition itself received a lot of media and public attention. The main achievement was the positive reaction to the visual works by the people who were interviewed for the project.

<https://bnt.bg/news/izlozhba-ne-e-kakto-tryabva-v-galeriya-depoo-do-10-mai-v366817-328340news.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15W4T8Hsm9/>

Polina Stoyanova
(Bulgaria)

It the Dunes

Short introduction of the initiative:

An exhibition of watercolour and coloured pencils works, presenting the endangered species in the dunes of the Black sea coast in Bulgaria.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2024

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Eco Centre, Nature Reserve/Parks, NGOs structure

Target group:

The people living in the city of Burgas, Bulgaria

Number of organisers engaged:

6

Number of young people that directly and indirectly was involved in and/or attended the initiative:

~20

Objectives / goals:

The aim was to support the initiative of the Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation "Save the Living Sands" with images that attract the viewer and also introduce the rare and often tiny species of plants and animals, which inhabit the sands of the sea-dunes. To raise the topic that these sands are a home to beautiful live and to uncover their existence, as a fact that usually stays hidden from the general beach visitor.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

And exhibition that took place during the celebration of Atanasovsko Ezero being a protected area for 40 years, which included games with the visitors, talks, bird observations and live music concert.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

There are future steps to be done for presenting the exhibition and the cause to a wider audience in a bigger venue in the city of Burgas.



Zero em Comportamento / Projectos Paralelos (Portugal)

Filminhos à Solta pelo País Little Films Loose Across the Country

Short introduction of the initiative:

Every month we present a different program of short films for children aged 4 to 10 years old, in sessions for schools and families, in different cities across the country. To make this project possible, we acquire the distribution rights for the films based on the themes we consider most important such as respect, solidarity and diversity.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2014 - ongoing

Duration:

Yearly

Target group:

This project allows children aged 4 to 10 years to access quality cinema and helps everyone (children, parents, and teachers) to experience for themselves that through watching fun films it is possible to address important topics for their development as more informed individuals.

Context/Location (multiple choice):

Institution of Formal Education

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

Our core team consists of 8 members who handle tasks such as organizing the film programs and catalogue, contacting schools and presenting our films to students, designing and promoting on our platforms. Whenever additional support is needed for a specific screening or event,

we hire extra resources on an ad-hoc basis.

Number of young people that attended the initiative:

Since its inception, this project has brought an average of 2,500 children per year to our Little Films Loose Across the Country sessions.

Objectives:

Today's societies increasingly demand a creative and adaptable workforce, which means educational systems must evolve to meet these needs. Artistic education enables students to express themselves individually and nurtures their critical thinking about the world around them. For children to fully participate in cultural and artistic life, they need to learn to engage with artistic expressions, gaining access to diverse perspectives on various aspects of life. To provide equal opportunities for artistic and cultural activities for all, we believe it is important that artistic education is an integral part of educational programs with a long-term vision. Thus, our two main objectives are to empower teachers and parents with the necessary tools to later educate children and to encourage creative partnerships between all levels of society.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Each session lasts about 55 minutes and consists of short films suitable for children aged 4 to 10 years. Each program is accompanied by a pedagogical guide and each partner location sets the entry price.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

Instituto do Cinema e do Audiovisual, IP (Portugal), Portuguese Republic and several Portuguese Municipalities throughout the years

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

For over two decades, Zero em Comportamento has been regularly exhibiting new titles in Portuguese cinemas, re-release unique independent films and programming cinema for youths across the country. Since we started this

project, we have been noticing that more families are attending our sessions, and we have been receiving more demands from other municipalities across the country. At the same time, each month the sessions are also available on our on-demand platform, Videoclube Zero em Comportamento, that has also been reporting an increasing on the number of subscriptions and views, being one of the most popular short film programs the one named "Little girls belong to wherever they want" that is dedicated to empowering little girls.

Little Films Across the Country trailers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTpUPlowoiI&list=PLiSNaCap98Y-kxz6MJsmYEEQ17PF4L7MW->



ProChild CoLab Against Poverty and Social Exclusion (Portugal)

1.0 Encontro Internacional do ProChild CoLAB /

Pacto para a Infância 1 st ProChild CoLAB International Meeting / Childhood Pact

Short introduction of the initiative:

The agenda of this meeting that took place in November 2023 revolved around the public petition fostered by ProChild CoLAB for public discussion around the Childhood Pact which is built upon four pillars: Promotion of social inclusion and fight against child poverty; Prevention and protection against all forms of discrimination and violence against children; Promotion of children's participation in advocating for their rights; Coordinating childhood policies at various levels of governance.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

November 2023

Duration:

2020 – ongoing

Target group:

Children, academics, professionals, representatives from public and private entities and policymakers.

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

Between 40 - 60

Number of young people that attended the initiative:

Around 300 children

Objectives:

This meeting was a unique opportunity that brought together academics, professionals, representatives from public and private entities and policymakers in a participatory and enriching debate on combating child poverty and promoting the well-being and rights of children. While putting children front and centre as a national priority, it aimed above all to generate a commitment for the adoption of active public policy measures and concrete actions oriented towards realizing the vision embodied in the Childhood Pact.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

To ensure fruitful discussions about the Childhood Pact, in January 2023 ProChild CoLAB began a preparatory work in which it conducted focus groups with children and discussion groups with reference professionals, organizations working on the ground, entities responsible for childhood and youth matters and local authorities experienced in initiatives involving children and young people. In total, there were held 15 working sessions that involved exploring children's rights through scenarios, scripts, and narratives created with them along with representations of stories that make up each pillar of the Childhood Pact. In these focus groups, children expressed the significance of the Pact and the importance they attribute to its different pillars through their own words. The outcome of these sessions was resumed in a video named "A Pact for Children in Children's voices" which was officially presented on November 27th. During this preparatory process, ProChild CoLAB also conducted discussion groups with the aim of exploring different professionals' perspectives on factors, conditions, mechanisms, strategies and measures to promote social inclusion and fight against child poverty. Representing each pillar of the pact, four groups were organized with the presence of a prominent researcher in the field, representatives from entities working on the ground, agents responsible for childhood and youth matters, and commissaries from local authorities with experience in initiatives involving children's participation. Each discussion group met twice online, led by a ProChild CoLAB researcher who posed common questions for all pact pillars and questions tailored for the theme of each specific discussion group, informed by literature and best practices. A ProChild CoLAB researcher also

during these sessions, taking in charge the task of collecting and processing information, but also moderating the roundtable discussion for their respective pillar, thereby bringing the reflections, insights, and recommendations generated by these discussion groups to the forefront.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

PRR (Plano de Recuperação e Resiliência), Portuguese Republic, European Union (NextGenerationEU), Missão Iterface, Agência Nacional de Inovação, Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Sic Esperança, Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade de Lisboa, Irmãos Rodrigues, Garantia para a Infância, Primeiros anos – a nossa prioridade, Município de Guimarães, Câmara Municipal de Famalicão

Outcomes and impacts of the initiative:

We increased by around 1000 the number of the petition signatures, ProChild CoLAB won the Humans Rights Award in 2023 from the Portuguese Republic and there were established several commitments on children's rights on the agendas of a number of institutions and participants of the meeting.

Agenda: <https://prochildcolab.pt/en/1st-international-meeting-of-prochild-colab-the-childhood-pact/agenda/>

Speakers: <https://prochildcolab.pt/en/1st-international-meeting-of-prochild-colab-the-childhood-pact/speakers/>

Video from the event: https://youtu.be/qaGvgcM-eUE?si=cNoO1od-etWXB_uKI

The Childhood Pact from the children perspective:

<https://youtu.be/0B57pL2NPgw?si=gnajTYfTBOePR7As>

Satisfaction report (in Portuguese):

https://prochildcolab.pt/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Relatorio-de-avaliacao-de-satisfacao-1o-Encontro_site.pdf

ARCI Chieti aps – Officine Culturali (Italy)

Out of the shadow

Short introduction of the initiative:

The pilot project "Fuori dall'ombra" ("Out of the Shadows") was developed to stimulate, support and facilitate the social inclusion in the community life of the patients of the Mental Health Institute of Chieti.

General idea was to bring out of the stigma the reality of the citizens suffering from psychiatric disorders in order to fight against prejudices and discrimination and allow them to discover new identity, create relationships and develop other possibilities of expression by stimulating their full abilities.

According to their psychiatric file elaborated by the scientific equip of the Institute, each of them was involved either in different socialization activities (creative workshops, creation of a social network, etc.) either in several internship in local NGOs.

Year in which it was established and/or realised:

2022

Duration:

Till 2009

Target group:

Chronic patients of the Mental Health Institute of Chieti (Abruzzo, Italy), department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

Location:

Youth Centre, Community centre, Rehabilitation centre, Urban area

Number of artists/youth workers/volunteers/organisers engaged:

More than 10 operators (social workers, sociologists, facilitators and

educators, etc.) specifically trained were involvement of the different phases of the project during the years.

Number of young people that attended the initiative:

All in all and considering the duration of the project (from 2002 till 2009), more than 30 citizens/patients have been involved in this long term educational path: majority of them were aged between 25 and 40 years old with couple of exception considering the specific target group of the activities.

Different phases of the initiative and/or list of activities:

Each of the artists (me among them) worked independently on the texts for about three months. The exhibition consisted of 12 tableaux, presenting different approaches and techniques – drawings, comics, photography, collages etc. Besides the tableaux we made an installation with quotes of the interviews on the gallery showcase window.

Ojectives/goals:

Main goals of the project have been to give another opportunity to people with psychiatric disabilities driving them (slowly) deeper into the society, to stimulate their perception of themselves and their feeling of social/cultural utility in the living community, to offer spaces and activities out of the Mental Health Institute able to stimulate their abilities and engagement.

Donors, Partners and other relevant local actors involved:

The project was organised in different stages and approached with various Non Formal Education methodologies. Once selected by the Mental Health Institute, participants were directed in 2 main educational paths:

Internships in NGOs one hour daily (afterwards 2 hours per day) through a direct coaching lead by a youth/social worker. Development of soft and hard skills (use of computer and windows package, how to set an informatics management of a small library, how to record all expenditure and revenue using the double-entry method, etc.)

Socialization activities twice per week through Non Formal Education

methodologies lead by 3 youth workers it was possible to realise different creative workshops (painting, theatre, creation of objects and toys using recycled materials or reusing wasted objects, etc.), re-establish and/or reinforce an healthy social environment and increase the self confidence and a positive perception of themselves together with the development of social and soft skills.

At the end of every semester cycle, different activities were realised to share the results of the different workshops within the local community together with a specific evaluation realised with the scientific equip of the Institute to check the social and personal development of the participants themselves.

Donors and partners:

The project born in partnership among the Mental Health Institute (in charge to select the participants, direct them in the different activities according to their social/personal needs, etc.), the Municipality of Chieti (in charge to cover economically the different internships and social activities/workshops) and our organisation ARCI Chieti (in charge to design and realise the several social activities/workshops, host different internships, take care of the human resources, etc.)





WORKING GROUPS

During the Seminar, participants had the opportunity to reflect on and establish a methodological platform concerning the impact of Art and artistic expressiveness on the youth inclusion and active participation.

Based on the results of the sharing sessions (examples of Projects, Activities, Campaigns carried out by partner associations in which art has been used as a tool for youth engagement in different fields of the daily life) and considering the previous meetings already realised since 2009 by the informal network 'Bitta Generation' on these issues, participants explored five macro areas: Art and Critical Thinking, How to organise an artistic workshop, Art and Youth Work, Power of Art in Education, Areas to use Art outside of art Contexts.

Main goal has been to connect Art with Education, Youth work and Community development, in order to come out with a common understanding and approaches on its powerful use.

Those reflections are published in this book to make them available to those who are interested in knowing them and, hopefully, to take inspiration to realise new and innovative activities in using art as a tool to facilitate processes of social inclusion and active involvement of young people and especially those coming from disadvantaged conditions.

ART AND CRITICAL THINKING

"Freethinkers are those who are willing to use their minds without prejudice and without fearing to understand things that clash with their own customs, privileges, or beliefs. This state of mind is not common, but it is essential for critical thinking."

Lev Tolstoy

Introduction

What is critical thinking?

Wikipedia says that: "Critical thinking is the analysis of available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments in order to form a judgement by the application of rational, skeptical, and unbiased analyses and evaluation."

In short, critical thinking is a skill – the skill to process and evaluate any information you receive, the skill to distinguish facts and truth from false claims and deception. In the age of mega data critical thinking is an essential skill – it helps us to navigate the vast ocean of information that we swim in, to keep touch with reality, to escape the traps of fake news and propaganda, to speak truth to power, to stand against injustice and also to challenge our own prejudices and biases. We need critical thinking to be able to evolve and flourish as a society.

Skills are not something we are born with, they need to be taught and learned, their development requires regular practice. Unfortunately at the majority of institutions for formal education the teaching of critical thinking doesn't seem to be a main goal. It is often being neglected in favor of the establishing of obedience and uniformity, rule-following and respect for authorities. It is a common expectation from students to simply sit down, listen and repeat the material that is being taught without challenging it with any questions or doubts. Moreover, in the field of humanities at school (but not only there, also outside of the educational systems on the internet, in public media, in the official rhetorics of many conservative and far-right political groups) there are tendencies for promoting certain national mythologies, usually based on glorifying some semi-legendary heroic past and some oppressive anti-democratic so called "traditional values". These tendencies simply don't

mix well with sceptical approach, with analytical methods, nor with the concept of plurality of opinions. After all, nationalistic myth-forging relies on passion and on almost religious-like believe, and religion doesn't appreciate doubt very much (see for instance the story of Job in the Old Testament or just Romans 14:23 in the New one:

"But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin".

And let's be honest, grown-ups and even well educated adult people are as susceptible to biases as children are, if not even more so. With aging one unconsciously tends to trust in their own justness a bit too much without checking it.

And if we take under consideration the fact that a lot of social concepts, human rights for example, have evolved quite drastically in the past couple of decades, there are a lot of older people who formed their notions on these topics earlier than that and still hold them firmly without recognizing the need for reevaluation.

So here comes art. Art in its many forms can be one of the main alternatives to institutional education in encouragement and development of critical thinking. Art can be informal, funny, sexy, exciting, weird, quiet, serious, rule-breaking, loud, challenging, it can show us perspectives that we've never seen, it can throw at us questions that we haven't thought of before. Art can nudge us into thinking.

Moreover, art can be instrumental in reaching wider audiences of all ages and in leaving a lasting mark in their minds. The confucian scholar Xunzi (340 - 245 BCE) has said: *"What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand."*. This quote demonstrates that for true learning one needs not just to be told something, but also to be able to visualize it and then to experience it personally.

How can art help us think and grow?

• Consistency and Perseverance

Art will never be a job done that we no longer need to engage with. Neither will be thinking for that matter. These are processes that give life meaning.

There is no point at which there will be no need for critical thinking. It has to be applied constantly in all kinds of situations. As was mentioned previously, many people harbor unconscious biases related to ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, physical abilities or disabilities, etc. Besides, we are all bombarded with false information and propaganda by ill-intentioned actors in power on a daily basis.

We simply need our minds to be active and sharp all the time. That's why there will always be a need to stimulate critical thinking as a lifelong process from youth to old age. Apathy and disinterest are probably the worst threats for this process. As Joseph Brodsky has said: ***"There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them."***

Art might be the best antidote for apathy. Yet, it's good to have a plan for the use of this antidote – sustainable strategies on how to handle and eliminate apathy and indifference. This plan can include social programs, active community centers, festivals, workshops, exhibitions, and other similar activities in and outside the formal education system. All these initiatives need to be engaging, but also long term and regular. Just like a book's purpose is to be read, a brain's purpose is to think – not for a little while, but constantly.

●The importance of communal approach

Art could be quite a lonely business. The artist could simply focus on their inner gaze and use their work as a form of escapism. More or less the same could be valid for the spectator as well – there are many artworks which help one to dissociate from the surrounding world. There still could be some form of connection in this situation, although a very quiet and solitary one. But! There's much more in art than this. Art could be socially-conscious, it can spark conversation, it can be an expression of much needed solidarity, it can help a community to unite and emancipate itself. Art can give voice to the voiceless, it can make people feel seen and appreciated, it can hold the status-quo under scrutiny – things that often can not be fulfilled inside the institutions for formal education due to many conditions and restrictions. Art can help us think without restrictions and to recognize systemic injustices. It can enable us to appreciate the power of community and to shake off our awe

at certain imposed authoritative voices and narratives. As George Orwell has said: ***"If people cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them."*** Socially-oriented art and critical thinking are crucial in developing personal responsibility to support and connect with others. They are an essential part of the fabric of an active society.

- **A tool for emancipation**

The world we live in is far from ideal. Access to goods is very sparse and uneven.

Knowledge is power, it's an essential tool for our thriving in life. But even though systems for public education have been established long ago all over

Europe, a lot of people graduate school still lacking important competences that would help them in their social growth. Key subjects, such as philosophy, arts, civic education, sex education, etc., are being neglected in the curriculum. There is an urgent necessity for reforms in the methodologies in formal education almost everywhere. Until these reforms happen some organizations are developing informal artistic teaching tools in an attempt to compensate for the deficits left by the official educational institutions.

The ability to develop critical thinking can empower individuals to navigate situations of vulnerability and disadvantage (unemployment, disability, structural discrimination, threats for one's body autonomy, etc.) and discover positive solutions.

Recommendations for creating a suitable environment for developing critical thinking

- **Acknowledge** that many school teachers who have educated previous generations and continue to do so often carry forward outdated habits and practices that are still in use today, and this urgently needs to be changed.

- **Avoid** communicating only in formal formats and languages.

Straightforward, user-friendly, inclusive materials in local languages and new free media should be made available.

- **Use accessibility** as the main criteria for communication: adjust

content to audiences' language and needs (braille, sign language, etc.). A few important conditions for a lasting impact

- **Active contribution** is as important for the realisation and continuation of the projects as financial support if not even more so

One of the greatest obstacles for the successful realization of lots of projects for informal education that aim to stimulate critical thinking is the unwillingness of some official representatives to assist the process. There are people (usually fitting quite well in the cliché of a soulless bureaucrat) who don't actually care much about the benefits for the community and somehow perceive these projects as unwanted extra-work for them (even though their work is exactly to improve the wellbeing of the community). Meeting that kind of unwillingness to cooperate can be very frustrating, especially if we consider the fact that sometimes these disengaged officials hold certain competence, authority and/or agency, much needed for the provision and logistics, technical support, public promotion, etc. of the project. When we meet that kind of reluctance for cooperation, it's good to remember that challenging establishment is never easy. It's also good to remember that people are more likely to give in to kindness rather than to curtness.

We need to cultivate more opportunities of engagement on the ground with all the parties involved, from donors and institutions to participants, to create a more inclusive approach that is based not just on funding a project, but on actually building a communal sense of connecting and belonging.

- **The facilitator** – a figure who can ease the communication and the logistics

Considering the mentioned above, we should recognize the necessity of a facilitator in the team – a person who keeps many connections and has refined diplomatic skills, who can ensure that communication flows smoothly between all parties. The good facilitator can prove to be very useful during the preparation and the working process of the different projects.

- **A virtual hub**, where documentations of different projects are collected and where different contributors connect, could amplify the impact and the longevity of the work.

Another very important factor for useful interaction and cooperation with the institutions or with other potential partners (other NGOs, businesses, independent artists, etc.) would be a representative online archive, in which previous and ongoing successful projects are collected and displayed. Some people who don't have a background in the same sphere, may have difficulty imagining the nature, the characteristics and the positive outcomes of our work.

These people could be won as supporters and contributors much easier if they can "get the picture" by looking through an accessible archive.

Keeping and growing an active network of organizations, independent artists and other interested potential collaborators that can share their experiences, projects and recommendations, is another key factor for the success of our work. There are many facebook groups for Erasmus+ project announcements for instance, but each of these groups has tens of thousands of members, which actually defeats the purpose of making meaningful and lasting connections – they have become as vast as an ocean of information, where every new post just sinks without any engagement. Having that in mind, it would be much more effective to use the space of this representative online archive also for networking – through an active contact form or through official email address(es) hosted by the web domain. Of course, it's good to keep and even extend our presence in social media, but all these channels can also forward visitors to the website with the full archive. In this way this online space will turn into **an actual online hub, not just a storage.**

In short, the different artistic, educational and social projects that are realized in on-ground and in-person live formats - seminars, interactive events, training courses, festivals, workshops, etc.- could get wider reach and longer lasting impact by being documented and saved in virtual formats - online archive, podcast, video channel, blog, etc.- that could be stored under one easily accessible domain, which can also serve as a platform for partnerships and collaborative relations. Also, in support of this process the topics for the on-ground organized workshops could include technical skills for making a podcast, journalistic principles in taking an interview or making a reportage, etc.

GUIDELINES



Art could be an alternative to help people develop critical thinking since there is a lack of teaching this skill in institutional educational systems.



Maintaining a vibrant ecosystem of like-minded artists, mentors, organizations, businesses, and government agencies is essential for the development of tools that stimulate critical thinking.



Everyone should be actively involved in the process, from start to finish. Providing financial support is just the first step, the willingness to really engage in the process hands-on ensures its longevity.

STRATEGIES



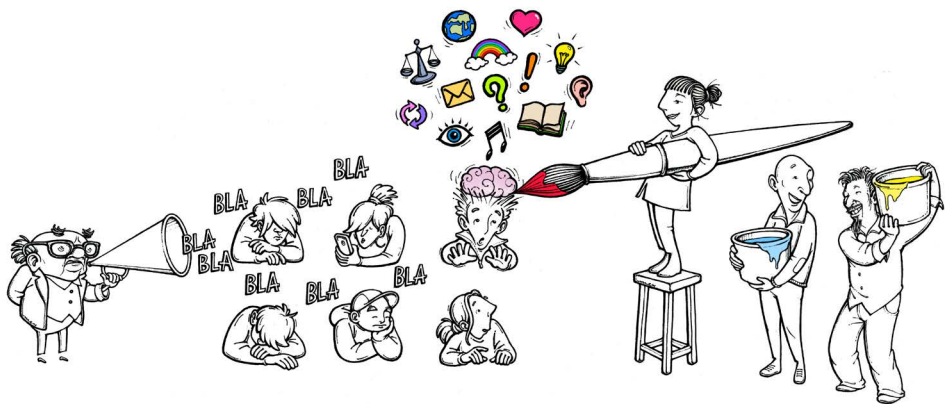
Create and maintain an active network and a free archive for artists, educators and activists to share their best practices, projects and recommendations in different mediums and formats like blog articles, podcasts, videos, comics, reports, books, etc.



Provide ready-to-use materials that enable educators (parents, teachers, youth workers) to engage with students or young people after an artistic event. These resources can encourage both critical thinking and opportunities for meaningful sharing.



Create opportunities motivate public and official entities to take on their roles more responsibly and actively. This will enable them to foster greater engagement in the projects they support.



Art and Critical Thinking work group:

Teodora Doncheva - Techwoo, **Bulgaria**

Margarida Oliveira, **Portugal**

Alexandra Forestina, **Serbia**

Armando Navarro, **France**

HOW TO ORGANIZE AN ARTISTIC WORKSHOP

Questions before you start:

- What is the role of the facilitator?
- What final results do I expect to reach?
- How to create a motivated group?
- How to keep people engaged in the process?
- How to stay flexible between your expectations and the workflow of the group?
- How to deal with problems inside the group?
- How much time do I need to complete the goal?
- How many people to include?
- How many facilitators?
- Which physical space is the proper one for the activity?
- How to deal with materials and logistics?
- How to have the proper preparatory communication?
- If it is located in a different place, how to get familiar with it in advance?

Fears:

- Failure
- Unsatisfaction
- Not enough time
- Overwhelming

Expectations:

- Satisfaction
- Positive environment
- Raise up competence
- Balance
- Being more motivated than before
- Benefit

Organization:

- Good Structure
- Time management (work and free time)
- Logistics
- Clear goals
- Horizontal hierarchy

Participation:

- Motivation
- Responsibility
- Being able to finish the tasks
- Cooperation
- Discuss the issues
- Improvisation
- Adaptation
- Self-esteem

Facilitation:

- Responsibility
- Supervision (external experts)
- Being neutral
- Additional facilitators
- Availability
- Solidarity
- Adaptation
- Improvisation
- Energizers
- Motivating

Finalization:

- Evaluation
- Results
- Publishing
- Exhibiting
- Follow-up

What is the role of the facilitator?

The facilitator acts as a guide, ensuring the group stays focused on its goals while maintaining neutrality. They provide support, foster collaboration, and adapt to the group's needs, balancing leadership with flexibility.

What final results do I expect to reach?

Clearly define the outcomes, such as creating tangible results, developing skills, fostering cooperation, and leaving participants more motivated and engaged than before.

How to create a motivated group?

Motivation comes from clear communication, seeing shared goals, and creating a positive, balanced environment where everyone feels valued. Using energizers and imagination-boosting activities can help establish a dynamic atmosphere.

How to keep people engaged in the process?

Sustained engagement requires a mix of structured activities, interactive discussions, and opportunities for personal contributions. Regularly regroup and encourage collaboration to keep energy levels high.

How to stay flexible between your expectations and the workflow of the group?

Be prepared to adjust plans based on group dynamics, ensuring flexibility in activities while keeping the end goal in sight. Listen actively to participants' needs and adapt accordingly.

How to deal with problems inside the group?

Address conflicts or stress promptly by providing individual support and fostering open communication. Encouraging solidarity within the group can also help resolve challenges collaboratively.

How much time do I need to complete the goal?

Assess the complexity of the goals and activities. A well-structured timeline—such as a four-day plan—can provide balance between focused work and necessary breaks.

How many people to include?

The number of participants should align with the scope of the project and the facilitators' capacity to manage and support the group effectively.

How many facilitators?

While one facilitator may suffice, additional facilitators can provide specialized guidance, ensure supervision, and share the workload.

Which physical space is the proper one for the activity?

Choose a space that is accessible, adaptable to the group's needs, and suitable for both individual and group work.

How to deal with materials and logistics?

Plan and prepare all necessary materials in advance, ensuring they are easily accessible during the workshop. Good logistical planning is key to a smooth workflow.

How to have the proper preparatory communication?

Use clear and timely communication to provide participants with all necessary details and expectations ahead of the workshop.

If it is located in a different place, how to get familiar with it in advance?

Visit the location beforehand if possible, or gather information remotely to anticipate any logistical challenges.

By answering these questions and structuring the process thoughtfully, you can address common fears such as failure, dissatisfaction, time pressure, and feeling overwhelmed. At the same time, you can work toward creating a positive environment that promotes satisfaction, competence, motivation, and balance, ultimately ensuring meaningful results.

An example of a timeline for a four day workshop:

I day:

- brainstorming on the subject
- sharing experience
- starting with imagination boosting games
- group tasks
- regrouping
- “loosing artistic ego” games
- letting people define their personal tasks

II day:

- gathering the whole group and exchanging in a discussion who is doing what

- understanding the different needs of the people
- managing your facilitator time in answering to the requests

III day:

- dealing with stressed out participants
- giving support to those who need it
- those participants who already finished, helping those who haven't

IV day:

- finalizing and organizing the final results
- involving the whole group in the final sharing
- making a final evaluation

This example of a timeline can be adapt to a bigger or smaller amount of time.



How to Organize an Artistic Workshop work group:

Polina Stoyanova, **Bulgaria**

Francesca Fontana, **Italy**

Elia Colalongo, **Italy**

Igor Arkhyenko, **Italy**

Dušan Mušić, **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

ART AND YOUTHWORK

Youth work has long played a vital role in supporting both communities and individuals, and it continues to do so today. Each youth center has its own unique identity and objectives, yet they all share a common commitment: to drive meaningful change while actively involving young people in the process.

In this context, art emerges as a distinct and powerful tool for inclusion, standing apart from other approaches through its unique applications. Sharing common practices rooted in non-formal education is therefore essential for achieving these goals and understanding how art can be effectively utilized as an instrument.

When considering what qualifies as “art”, many forms come to mind: paintings, murals, drawings and more. However, artistic expression encompasses several important aspects beyond each medium itself.

One of the key strengths of incorporating art into youth work is its accessibility—no professional expertise is required to take part or make meaningful contributions. Art serves as a deeply personal and empowering form of expression, providing young people with a powerful outlet to share their emotions, ideas, and experiences.

Art enables individuals to share their unique perspectives on crucial topics such as the environment, mental health, politics, and human rights. By communicating through art, individuals can inspire their communities to reflect on these issues and raise awareness.

In youth work, the most valuable aspect of art is its ability to bring people together, fostering a sense of community. It creates a welcoming and collaborative environment where young people and youth workers can learn from one another. Art’s symbolic language carries the potential to spark positive change both for individuals and within communities.

Engaging with art encourages young people to adopt open-minded perspectives and enhances their ability to view the world in diverse ways. This process stimulates their imagination, sharpens their interpretive skills, and fosters critical thinking, helping them better understand the reality around them while contributing their own insights and ideas.

Art has many advantages as a tool in youth work, offering diverse methods and techniques that can be tailored to suit various situations and groups. Some techniques require more skills from facilitators, while others can be implemented with minimal expertise and delivered spontaneously based on the situation and the needs of the target group. Participants in these workshops don't need prior knowledge or experience of the specific art form, as the process itself is often more important than the final outcome. Facilitators frequently adopt a role of equals with participants, fostering a safe and inclusive environment by breaking down traditional barriers.

Art also provides an opportunity to develop practical skills, such as painting, drawing, sculpting, using tools like graffiti spray cans, or creating murals from initial sketches to final execution. These skills empower young people, allowing them to reclaim and transform their environment in creative and meaningful ways.

Additionally, art is highly accessible due to the wide variety of techniques available.

Facilitators can select methods that align with the interests and needs of the young people they work with. Whether through collage, stencil art, photography, music, or spoken word, every individual can find a medium that resonates with their unique identity. This diversity fosters a sense of inclusion and encourages participation.

Furthermore, the artistic process can be a useful tool to promote and facilitate the educational path and personal development of each individual. Building artistic skills, knowledge, and capacities creates a valuable pathway for fostering growth and self-improvement in other areas of life.

In essence, art is a universal tool that enables young people to grow, connect with the world, and develop both creative and critical perspectives. It empowers them to express themselves, explore their individuality, and engage meaningfully with their communities.

ADVICE	AVOID
Use Art as an Inclusive Tool forms	Restricting participants to specific art forms
Encourage Open-Mindedness figures	Positioning facilitators as authority figures
Adapt Techniques to Needs outputs	Prioritizing perfectionism in artistic outputs
Support self-expression	Building competition
	Black holes. It causes spaghettification

"Creativity is contagious, pass it on." - Albert Einstein

Art and Youthwork work group:

Emmanuel Forain, **Belgium**

Elise Cransveld, **Belgium**

Alice Caprari, **Italy**

Bojan Lacmanovic, **Germany**

Natalija Stojanović, **Serbia**

POWER OF ART IN EDUCATION – ACTIVATION OF CREATIVITY



In order to have educational purpose and to achieve activation of creativity, art can manifest in different ways. It can be organised in schools, as a part of standard curriculum. As non formal educational activities. And, as standalone interactive works of art. In any case, here we will represent general information about how to utilise power of art in education.

HOW TO:

DIRECT APPROACH

"First kittens are thrown in water."

The best way to have promising results is to have a minimum amount of explanation and interruption. In this way you provide a fast and very advanced learning curve.

CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Important thing to remember is to create space and energy for participants where they can have completely free creative expression.

PROGRESSING POTENTIAL

In most cases, participants will want to continue exploring their creativity, so creating a continuing opportunity for them to advance is good way to support them.

INDIVIDUALISM

Beside creative expression, creating safe space for expressing individual opinions and ideas, creates powerful combination of educational process.

CRITICAL THINKING

Beside artistic expression, it is important to create environment for dialog between participants. This can result in questioning established realities and improve their critical thinking. Art is always there to question status quo.

MODELS OF INTERACTION

What kind of activities can we organise? There are many activities of different shapes and sizes. Here, you can find some of them.

ART WORKSHOPS

Art workshops are the simplest way to use art in education. You need material for workshop, participants and, not always, a subject.

Types of workshop:

- Drawing
- Painting
- Theatre
- Movies
- Music
- Dance
- Performance
- Street Art

BUILDING WORKSHOPS

This kind of workshops are activating all the senses, skills and imagination. Going from 2D TO 3D can open all kinds of possibilities.

Types of workshops:

- Model making
- Abstract object making
- Doll making
- Architecture models

ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS

Artistic interventions, especially in public space, can be powerful way for communicating and educating public. The transfer of information is very direct and fast.

Types of interventions:

- Installations
- Exhibitions

STRATEGIES

CARING AND SHARING

Using art as a medium for sharing knowledge and learning. What ways can be used to reach this point and what these ways should look like? Let us imagine a simple workshop and its organization. First of all, we introduce the topic of the workshop and what is going to be our final result. After that we are showing the process of our activity, in the same time we are giving relevant instructions and some tips which are useful for participants. Next step is to let the participants repeat the process with our assistance. Final step is to take a look at the result of their work and give them feedback.

SOCIAL NETWORK IN ART FIELD

One of the important aspects of progress is sharing and combining knowledge of different people. To achieve this point we can create and develop art communities as a tool for social network. Thus, we may reduce the amount of time for learning and studying, and also reach better results with less efforts.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION/ LEARNING BY DOING

Through the form of non-formal education we can collaborate with municipal institutions and extracurricular activities. Such approach of studying allows us to bring experience and particular knowledge to people of all groups regardless of their interests, professions, background, age etc.

GROUND FOR SHARING AND PROMOTING INFORMATION

In order to share knowledge and experience with people we need some kind of base where we can do that. Art events and art projects can take

this role as attractors of different kind of artists and also new people.

ADVISES

DEFINED AND NON DEFINED FREEDOM

Balanced organisation of defined and non defined freedom during activities is required in order to give the participants clear idea of final result of their activities. Otherwise, the participants may be misled by wide range of opportunities, possibilities or ideas of expressing themselves.

PARTICIPANTS

Organising participants in functioning groups by their age, skill, interests, experience is very useful. Such approach helps us create a favourable environment for the sharing of information, since all participants are able to actively participate in the process.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ARTWORKS, KNOWLEDGE AND PARTICIPANTS

Creating clear connection and interaction between artworks, knowledge and participants means providing deep and clear understanding with one another. This involves creating opportunities for participants to interact with and interpret artworks, drawing connections to broader knowledge or concept, and improving their understanding or experience.

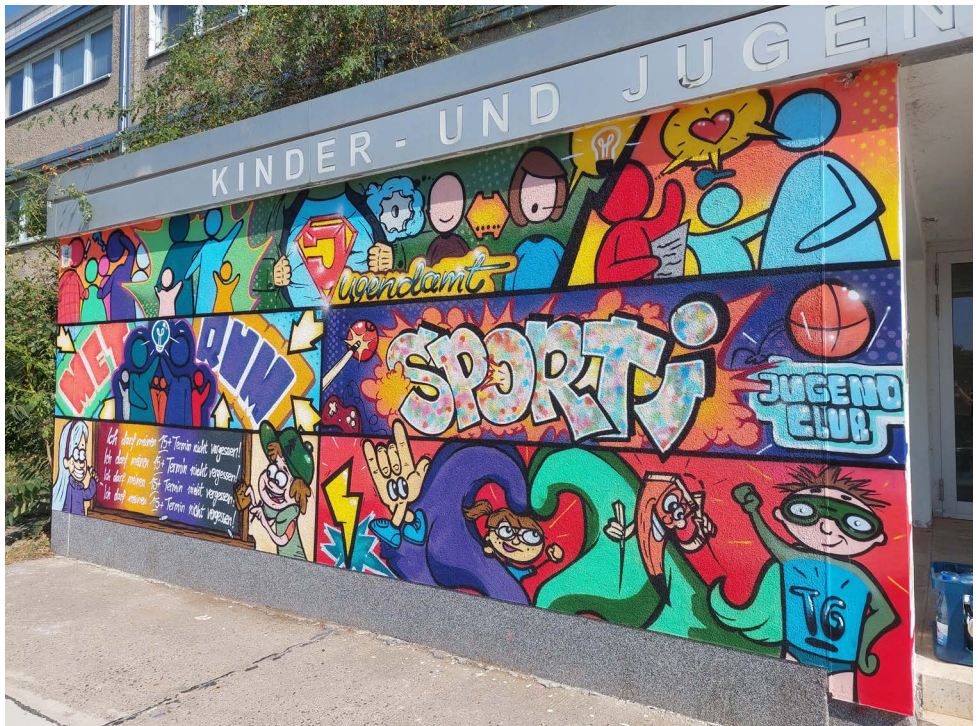
BENEFITS

- All this activities result in numerous positive outcomes:
- Learning new skills and upgrading existing ones
- Developing tactile skills, motoric, body coordination and movement
- Developing cognitive skills
- Developing social skills
- Possibility of self reflection and self realisation
- Finding out possible passions for future growth

- Protecting and nurturing imagination

Power of Art in Education – Activation of Creativity work group:

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FREEDOM

CHANGE

UNITY

ECOLOGY

PURPOSE

AREAS TO USE ART OUTSIDE OF ART CONTEXTS

VISIBILITY

EMPOWERMENT

**MENTAL
HEALTH**

CRITICAL THINKING

CONCIOUSNESS

YOUTH WORK

**AESTHETIC
EXPRESSION**

TOOL

EDUCATION

ART

SOCIETY

TEACHERS

PEOPLE

Introduction

Trying to find the place for art in the world is a longstanding debate of if it belongs on the shelf or in the streets as a social way of impact. Both the art with some kind of assigned purpose and the art that is made only for the sake of the art itself have their values and roles in society depending on their context and interpretation. It is argued that all art itself inherently has some kind of purpose, no matter if it's only for an individual that seeks refuge in it or if it was made to influence the masses.

Defining specific use of art practices

When it comes to the art practices that have clear and measurable impact outside of solely aesthetic aspect of themselves, in the following text we will try to name and define as precisely as possible the spectrum of practices and fields found in the case studies and other means of collective self reflection in our network of associations and initiatives:

Having on mind the fundamental nature of artistic content as kind of universal language that has power to bridge the differences, whether on level of identities, languages, perspectives, opinions and attitudes, or misbalances of power on whatever basis they are founded, we can list out the following fields of practice where the above mentioned quality of artistic content has already given great results:

Social reintegration of marginalized, vulnerable or stereotyped groups, including following specific groups from our network practices and projects:

Refugees and migrants

Domestic violence victims

War veterans

Gender/LGBTQ+ /women rights initiatives and cases of exclusion based on such aspects of personal or group identity

Mentally impaired persons

Fostering transgenerational solidarity and understanding

Substance abuse and addiction victims

Various inclusive artistic practices have so far proven to help in empowering above mentioned groups through increasing visibility of such

groups, their needs and typical issues they are facing, as well as contribute to their social reintegration through learning and training provided for them through various artistic practice formats. Engaging this groups in artistic activities.

Examples of such successful projects are:

"Out of shadow"- ARCI Chieti- facilitating the social inclusion in the community life of the patients of the Mental Health Institute in Chieti

"ProChild CoLab Against Poverty and Social Exclusion"-> promotion of social inclusion and fight against child poverty, prevention and protection against all forms of discrimination and violence against children, advocating for their lives, coordinating childhood policies at various levels of governance.

"All is not well" -> raising visibility on the life of the people with disabilities and their caregivers in Bulgaria and on the issues that they are facing.

Artistic practices also contributed significantly to creating safe and welcoming space for greater freedom of expression and self-reflection among members of these marginalized groups, which led further to their increased capacities for orientation and strategic decision making relating their own life and future perspectives.

Moreover, various art therapy and workshop methodologies have significantly contributed to changes on the institutional level how these cases and groups are being treated, setting good practice models that, once proven to be functional on micro level, have been multiplied and integrated into policies implemented by ministries, governments, International bodies and funding stakeholders.

Examples of such successful projects are:

"Dire Nous", Les Recollets->giving young people who are facing social and economic challenges a way to express themselves while teaching them about relative subjects and including them.

"Teenage god"->workshops which give teenagers a free space for them to express themselves in order to generate music,pictures,videos,performances..

Special emphasis should be put on the role of art in the intercultur-

al communication context, whether on everyday level or on diplomatic strategies levels, especially because of the nature of artistic narrative that quite often is able to convey and present very complex informations and values in a simple, easy to understand way for everyone.

Examples of such successful projects are:

"Respekt und Neugier Festival", Roter Baum Berlin->Improvement and support of the festival by international participants/artists in local context of the festival and involvement of group into the preparatory work through their artistic vision.

Many other projects share the same vision of bringing people together through art all while improving the local environment.

As kind of a safe field for expression, art can quite often shed light on the processes, situations and practices in society that tend to develop as invisible and taken for granted, and thus deconstruct biases and mechanisms of discrimination or corruption, increasing the awareness and critical thinking capacities of individuals, groups and societies whether towards themselves or to their peers. As a result this impacts the society as some form of collective therapy.

This leads us to another great field of discussion and reflection, that is , the relation between arts and social dynamics and social change. Artistic content and specific artistic practice can be a catalyst of social change, it can facilitate greater freedom of expression among groups and individuals, which directly leads to faster dynamism of social change according to values and tendencies that are expressed. Whether we speak of change of behaviours, or change of policies, Art is always there as something that supports new identities in periods of unstable and stressful process of change, and it also becomes overcome the frustration of separating from the unwanted past patterns.

Artistic field as kind of imaginary and hypothetic field of creation and reflection quite often serves as safe space laboratory for new models in social and cultural innovation , that offers to the society practically tested solutions that are being multiplied into new trends and policies.

Since there is no adopting of change and new behaviours without important aspect of education as in between process , the role of artistic practic-

es in education is enormous - as it provides testing and adopting the new behaviours in the safe field of game and play, so that later, when applied in everyday life, the new patterns of behaviour are already trained and tested, so that individuals and groups can function optimally in the new reality.

Examples of such successful projects are:

"20 brave women", Elekrika" - a series of mural painting workshops for women in order to increase their capacities for visual expression and empower them.

"Festival Planete Peripherique", The Pink Flamingo partener of RAS-> freedom of artistic expression on a building scheduled for demolition, inclusion of community through them meeting the artists and celebrating the past chapter of history of that neighbourhood.

The list of educational applications of artistic context is definitely not exhausted here, whether in social change context or any other context existing, but that is to be determined by a specific working group that is dedicated solely to this topic, that is, art and education.

The importance of art also lays in the fact that at some point its hard to influence people once they have growned accustomed to certain way of thinking. Regarding this it is important to bring art as an reinforcement in the field of education, where kids can be guided in a critical way of thinking before entering the world as concious adults who are making real influencial decisions. Kids and youngsters themselves are able to influence both their parents and people around them which is exactly why it is important to show them the right way. That is done through implementing of art and youthwork in schools since for kids art is the kind of fun in which they are able to express themselves as well as raise their own awariness.

Examples of such successful projects are:

"Creative august", ZDS->number of creative workshops led and organised by young artists in order to facilitate the youth in their free summer time,for them to acquire new skills and develop personal talents.

"Spaces of change", Habitus->artistic expression in art spaces, crea

tive workshops

"Cinema Helps Us Grow", Zero em Comportamento/Projectos Paralelos->using cinema as a tool to foster debate and reflections on fundamental societal and personal growth issues with high school students.

"Little Films Loose Across the Country", Zero em Comportamento/Projectos Paralelos->educating kids on different topics through a series of short films in sessions for schools and families in different cities across the country.

In the environmental protection context and context of raising the ecological consciousness of individuals and communities, art has shown great utilisability and positive impact both through various formats of educating the communities, reinforcing new eco friendly behaviours and lifestyles, as well as sharing and presenting important information through attractive, easy to understand communication formats combining graphic, visual, auditive materials. At some points, such contents have gained viral status in the internet context, serving as a vehicle for communicating important shift in values, trends and behaviours that contribute to ecological transition of the society towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyles.

Examples of such successful projects are:

"In the Dunes" by Polina Stoyanova->an exhibition of water color and colored pencils works,presenting the endangered species in the dunes of the black sea coast in Bulgaria.

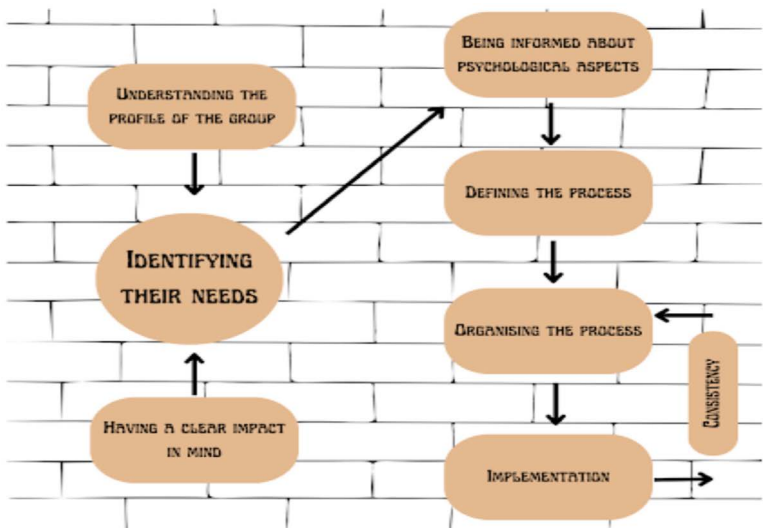


Usage of art extends to the point where art is used as a toll to highlight and give visibility and voice to those who cant manage to tell their story or their story simply isnt being heard.

STRATEGIES

When forming the strategies of applying various impacts through art as a driving force, it would be important to start from identifying the needs of specific groups that are included in such initiatives, workshops, campaigns and activities, having the clear impact or final outcome on mind. Defining the process in all its stages and details, as well as anticipating all the potential dynamics that might optimize it or endanger it would be also important.

Being informed about the psychological aspects of such process both on the side of artists involved as well as the target group would be of great use for a producer/organiser while defining and building the group/ organizational/communicational culture , as well adopting a multiperspective horizontal facilitation methodologies that would help create safe space for expression, constructive exchange of different opinions, questioning and diplomatic bridging of differences.





REFERENCES

This document was made through references and examples of good social artistic practices shared inbetween active NGOs.

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This book may contain some grammar mistakes in the English and Italian text. Thank you for your understanding and for your consideration for the efforts we invested in writing in these languages.

Questo libro può contenere alcuni errori nei testi in inglese ed in italiano. Contiamo sulla vostra comprensione e sulla vostra considerazione per lo sforzo che abbiamo fatto nello scrivere in queste due lingue. Grazie!

