

The State-of-the-art report

on artistic and creative methods
and practices for fostering inclusion
of young people with fewer
opportunities



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Inclusionary Art for Social Inclusion

1.1. Introduction

Welcome dear reader!

We're on a mission to make sure young people get fair shots, no matter where they come from or what obstacles they might be facing. This report is packed with ideas focusing on creative and artistic methods that have already helped make a difference, and we are excited to share them with you.

Why did we bring this together? Because we believe that when everyone gets equal opportunities and participates fully in life, our communities become stronger. There are a lot of young people out there who are getting left behind because of tough circumstances – maybe it's economic hardship, physical, mental, or learning disability, facing ethnic or racial discrimination, living in rural areas, or just feeling out of place. This report is all about changing that. It's about showing you ways to help young people feel included and valued, and how to break down barriers that stand in their way.

The report is the result of a research conducted as part of the Erasmus+ KA220 project Inclusionary – Art for Social Inclusion. As a repository of good practices in fostering social inclusion and a guide on how to choose and use them, it offers youth workers and other experts valuable information and skills to improve their work with young people with fewer opportunities using creative and artistic methods. The report also includes recommendations and guidelines on artistic and creative methods for youth workers and other experts. It can be an addition to the pool of knowledge for other educators, trainers, community workers, decision-makers and different stakeholders who work with young people with fewer opportunities, thus fostering and promoting inclusion and diversity, active citizenship, participation of groups with fewer opportunities, and the transferability of project results.

THE PRIMARY TARGET GROUP

are youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators, and other experts who work with disadvantaged young people. They work in institutions and non-governmental organisations, and in different areas of education that fosters inclusion of their target group.

THE SECONDARY TARGET GROUPS

are disadvantaged young people, or 'young people with fewer opportunities' (YPWFO) - with a migrant or refugee background, young people with different disabilities, young people from rural areas, but also NGOs or institutions whose beneficiaries are YPWFO, and artists and professionals from cultural associations.



1.2. Project Summary

Inclusionary - Art for Social Inclusion is an Erasmus+ project aimed at leveraging the transformative power of the arts to enhance social inclusion and develop essential life skills among young people facing social, economic, or educational barriers.

Over the course of 28 months, the project aims to cultivate a sense of belonging among participants but also to foster a sustainable model for community-based inclusion practices. Besides this report, the project results are educational materials for youth workers. The materials will be designed based on the data collected in this report.



a TOOLBOX

with new artistic methods for youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators and other experts working with disadvantaged young people from rural areas, with a migrant/refugee background, and with disabilities



3 LTTAs (Learning, teaching and training activities)

based on the TOOLBOX where the youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators and other experts will be able to test and learn firsthand the new methods



a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course)

an online course with innovative artistic methods

1.3. The consortium



A4ACTION (Romania)

A4ACTION is a non-profit association located in the Snagov community of Romania. It is dedicated to developing the community by promoting sustainable youth initiatives in lifelong learning, culture, ecology, youth participation, and civic engagement. Its mission is to foster strong community involvement by enhancing communication and cooperation among young people, teachers, parents, and stakeholders.



Espacio Rojo (Spain)

Espacio Rojo is a non-profit association founded in 2004 in Carabanchel, Madrid, Spain, which understands art as a fundamental right, essential for the integral and kind development of the human being. It promotes spaces for reflection, experimentation and meeting between people related to the cultural field and the community, and it develops projects that foster interculturality, integration, social awareness, and gender equity.



Delta (Croatia)

Association Delta from Rijeka (Croatia) aims to foster a culture of active citizenship, focusing on empowering responsible and proactive youth through activities like non-formal education, research, public policy and advocacy. Delta engages and collaborates across local, regional, and EU levels to enhance youth involvement and democracy development.



GAIA Museum (Denmark)

GAIA Museum in eastern Jutland, Denmark, is an art museum for outsider art, a socioeconomic workplace and pedagogical activity for people with learning disabilities and other special needs. In connection with the museum is GAIA Academy - a studio and art education facility whose purpose it is to support the artists' work and development.



InterAktion (Austria)

InterAktion is a non-profit association based in Austria, active in the field of human rights, sustainability, and integration. It supports young people from migrant families and young refugees in their integration process by providing them with educational opportunities and helping them to navigate through professional orientation.

a4action.ro/en/inclusionary



Research Analysis

2.1. The research frame

- The aim of the research was to map and describe the existing methods and practices youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators, and other experts use in their work with YPWFO (rural youth, young people with disabilities, refugee and immigrant youth) to foster social inclusion, with a focus on creative and artistic methods. Apart from the methods and practices themselves, the research is focused on mapping the common challenges youth workers and other experts face in assessing the needs and interests of their target group.
- The research methods used were desk research, a questionnaire and focus groups conducted in each partner country.
- Desk research involved reviewing existing EU policies and frameworks that support social inclusion for young people with fewer opportunities, as well identifying successful examples of projects and initiatives within the EU and by the partner countries.

Whilst clarifying that the list is not exhaustive, The European Commission lists the following as barriers:

- disabilities
- health problems
- barriers linked to education and training systems
- cultural differences
- social barriers
- economic barriers
- barriers linked to discrimination
- geographical barriers

(Inclusion A to Z, SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre, 2022)



THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the main challenges in fostering inclusion when working with YPWFO in non-formal contexts in Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Romania, and Spain?
2. What are the most common strategies and methods used to overcome these challenges in partner countries?
3. What are the existing practices to foster inclusion of YPWFO through artistic and creative methods in partner countries and on the EU level?

Based on these three researched questions, the questionnaire and the focus group protocol were designed (Appendix 1 and 2).

2.2. Literature and policy review

In this section, we outline our key concepts to identify effective strategies across the European Union, focusing on those that promote inclusivity of young people with fewer opportunities by using creative and artistic methods.

Artistic methods do not have to be utilised only by artists and cultural workers, they can benefit youth workers from different backgrounds. The need to promote creative and artistic methods and tools is supported by various research and reports that show their transformative nature, and their potential to aid personal expression and self-discovery. This is especially important for young people from underprivileged backgrounds who have limited opportunities to explore and express themselves.

The European Commission defines '(young) people with fewer opportunities' as (young) people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, due to their migrant background, or for reasons such as disability or educational difficulties or for any other reason, including a reason that could give rise to discrimination under Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the Programme". (Erasmus+ and ESC Inclusion and diversity strategy 2021-2027).

Inclusion means respecting and valuing diverse identities and experiences and enabling full participation of everyone. Note that the term itself implies that the

people you are trying to include were likely previously excluded. Within the framework of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, the focus of inclusion lies on young people with fewer opportunities who are disadvantaged compared to their peers because they face one or more of the exclusion factors, obstacles and barriers. (SALTO-YOUTH Inclusion & Diversity Resource Centre, 2022)

Barriers may be structural, or they may refer to policies, practices, and beliefs that limit or prevent a set of people access to opportunities that are available to others. There are several types of barriers, and they can hinder participation both as a standalone factor and in combination.

When asked about the most common barriers faced by young people in the organisation's target group, the most frequently mentioned barriers were economic barriers, cultural and geographical barriers and barriers related to education and training systems and discrimination. The least frequently mentioned barriers were disability and barriers related to health problems. (Erasmus+ and ESC Inclusion and diversity strategy 2021-2027)

The positive impact of art and cultural education on learning processes has been supported by many studies and reports (EP, 2017: Arts, culture, and cultural awareness in education). Arts and culture can foster intrapersonal skills, personal expression, self-discovery, creativity, and self-esteem, as well as develop transversal skills and attitudes such as critical and innovative thinking, respect for diversity, digital and media literacy, which are highly needed in today's societies.

Inclusive art projects deliver a range of positive outcomes for both artists and audiences, from the wellbeing and health benefits of participating in culture-making, employment and economic participation, to the creation of new aesthetics, comment on contemporary arts practice and social critique.

Inclusive arts practice is a flexible, creative process that ensures equal access to the arts for all marginalised groups, including people with disability, mental health issues and who are deaf, as audiences, artists and participants. Providing an equitable framework for access and participation

requires careful thought and planning and a clear understanding of what the barriers may be for the particular community you wish to engage. Working in an inclusive way means making sure that you have done your research and planned carefully, consulted with the community you will work with and considered the tools and resources available to you. (Art for everyone, Art Access Victoria)

When we talk about inclusion and diversity projects in the context of Erasmus+ in the field of Youth we refer to projects that:

- **either actively involve young people with fewer opportunities (providing tailored)**
- **preparation, support and follow-up for them);**
- **and/or address issues of inclusion and diversity that ultimately benefit young**
- **people with fewer opportunities (even when they are not directly involved in the project).**

(Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy – in the field of youth, 2014)

The European Union (EU) has long recognized the critical role of youth in shaping an inclusive and forward-thinking Europe. To utilise the potential of young individuals and ensure their active participation in societal development, the EU has established policies and frameworks aimed at youth inclusion. These initiatives span from education and training to employment, social inclusion, and participation in democratic life, reflecting the EU's approach to

empowering the next generation.

At the heart of these efforts is the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027), a policy designed to foster youth engagement, connect young people across the continent, and empower them through various programs and opportunities. This strategy sets up the base for future efforts to improve inclusivity and diversity among young people.

The EU Youth Strategy emphasises the need to increase the recognition of non-formal learning through youth work with a focus on accessible and flexible lifelong learning opportunities, as well as active support to disadvantaged groups.

Complementing the Youth Strategy is the Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the Field of Youth 2021-2027, focusing specifically on making youth activities more inclusive and accessible to all. This strategy acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of European youth and aims to reduce barriers to participation.

The Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps offer young people opportunities for learning, and volunteering, in countries other than their own, fostering a sense of European identity and solidarity. Meanwhile, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Youth Guarantee programs address key challenges such as employment and social inclusion, offering support and opportunities for young people to gain skills and start their careers.

The EU also prioritises specific objectives through the European Youth Goals and the Youth Action Plan in EU external action 2022 – 2027, focusing on areas such as inclusive societies, quality employment, and youth participation in democratic life. These are complemented by targeted recommendations, such as the Council Recommendation on the Inclusion of Young People with Fewer Opportunities, and frameworks like the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, which aim to ensure that all young people can benefit from the same opportunities, regardless of their background.

In summary, with plans like the EU Youth Strategy and programs like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps, the EU is working hard to make sure young Europeans have more chances to learn, work, and take part in society. These efforts are about making sure every young person, no matter where they come from, can join in, and have the same opportunities. By tackling important issues like employment, education, and active participation in the community, the EU is preparing young people for a better future. All these actions show how much the EU values its youth and their role in building a stronger, more united Europe.

2.3. The questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire focused on existing practices and challenges the target group (youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators, and other experts) face in their work on fostering social inclusion.

It consisted of 15 questions (13 close-ended and 2 open-ended) about the research topic and 7 socio-demographic questions about the respondents themselves.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about the participants' target group, how they reach their target group, how they conduct their needs assessment and what challenges they think that YPWFO in their communities face on an everyday basis. The next part was about their work and the methods they use – how do they stay up to date with the latest developments in their field, what skills would they like to improve, what art methods do they use and would like to use in the future, and what is important for a method to be effective in fostering inclusion of YPWFO. The last part was about the challenges they face in their work, how do they overcome them and what would help them to overcome these challenges.

The questionnaire was made using Google Forms. The dissemination of the questionnaire was done online (via e-mail, websites and social media) in each partner country, throughout June and July 2024. The partnering organisations used their

personal contacts, mailing lists and online research to reach the respondents that match the target group (youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators, and other experts that work on inclusion in different contexts). The questionnaire was thus sent to non-governmental organisations, schools, social and cultural institutions that are focused on youth work, inclusion and/or art.

About the respondents

132

respondents completed the questionnaire:

31 from Romania

28 from Croatia

26 from Spain

25 from Austria

22 from Denmark.

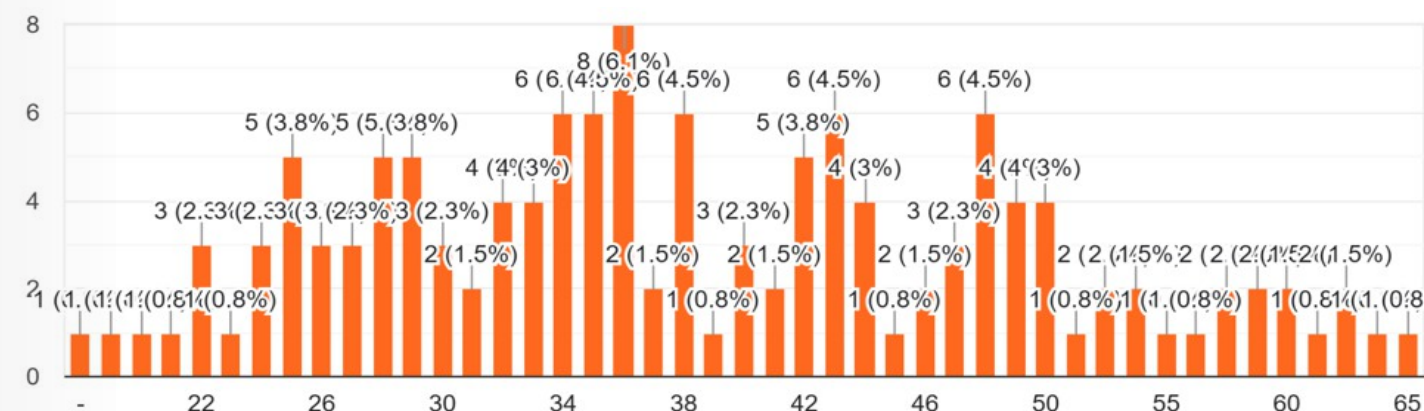
73.5% female

22.7% male

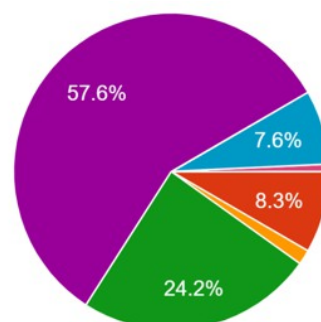
3% preferring not to answer

0.8% non-binary

They were aged from 20 to 65, with almost a fourth younger than 30 years (23.1%), 60% are between 30 and 50 years and only 16.9% are older than 50 years. The average age is 39 years.

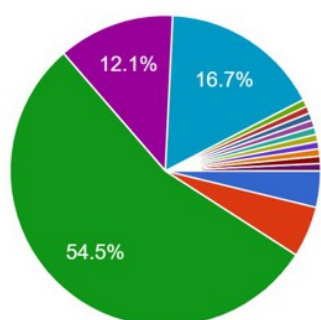


Most respondents have completed a master's degree (57.6%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (24.2%), high school education (9.1%), a doctorate (7.6%), and trade/technical/vocational training (1.5%).



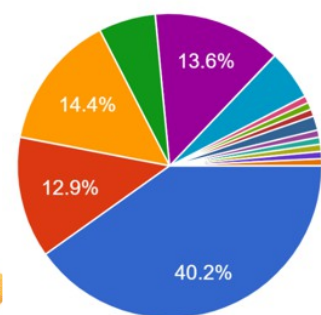
- Elementary school
- High school
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree
- Art high school

When asked about their current work status, a bit over a half of the respondents stated they are full-time employees (57.6%), while almost one-sixth are employed part-time (15.2%) and about one-fifth are self-employed (21.2%). There are 8.3% students among the respondents, 3.8% unemployed, one listed as retired and one as unable to work. Several answers were overlapping in these categories, like being a student and employee or part-time employed while doing artistic freelance work.



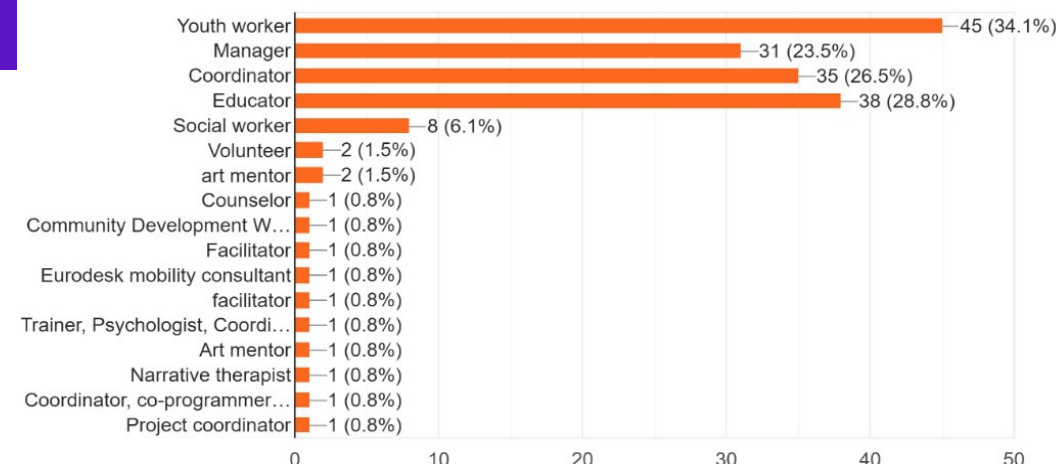
- Unemployed
- Student
- Unable to work
- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee
- Self-employed
- Retired
- part-time employee and part-time freel...

Almost half of the respondents work in non-governmental organisations (45.5%), followed by schools (14.4%), social institutions (13.6%) and cultural institutions (12.9%). A small portion of the responses came from universities (6.1%), non-formal groups (5.3%), private companies (1.5%), and hospitals (0.8%).



- Civil society organisation
- Cultural institution
- School
- University
- Social institution
- Non-formal group
- Hospital
- in civil society c

The most common positions/roles within their organisations are youth workers (34.1%), educators (28.8%), coordinators (26.5%) and managers (23.5%), while other positions mentioned were: social worker, volunteer, art mentor, counsellor, community development worker, facilitator, project coordinator, Eurodesk mobility consultant, narrative therapist. The answers showed that some participants work within different roles simultaneously.



The target group

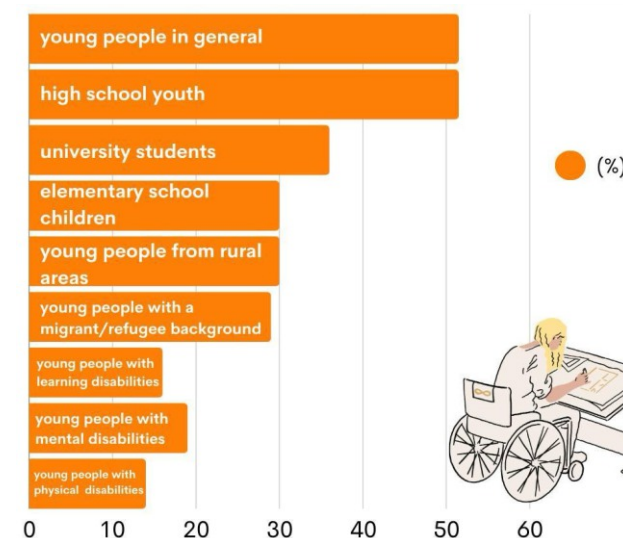
When asked about their target group, 132 respondents gave 376 answers, which indicated that each respondent works with a few different groups.

The most common answers (both 51.5%) include high school youth and young people in general.

Around one third work with elementary school children (30.3%), university students (36.4%), young people from rural areas (30.3%) and young people with a migrant/refugee background (28.8%).

Almost half of them work with young people with some sort of disability, among which are young people with learning disabilities (15.9%), mental disabilities (18.9%) and physical disabilities (13.6%).

Other answers include: adults both young and older with mental disabilities, marginalised young people with minority backgrounds, young people at risk of social exclusion or suffering from it, young people from social assistance centres, children and youth in care.



Reaching the target group

The respondents and their organisations reach their target group mostly through their services, activities and events (73.5%), through the cooperation with schools or other educational institutions (58.3%), and through social service institutions (25.8%). About 37.9% state that members of their target groups actively reach out to them.



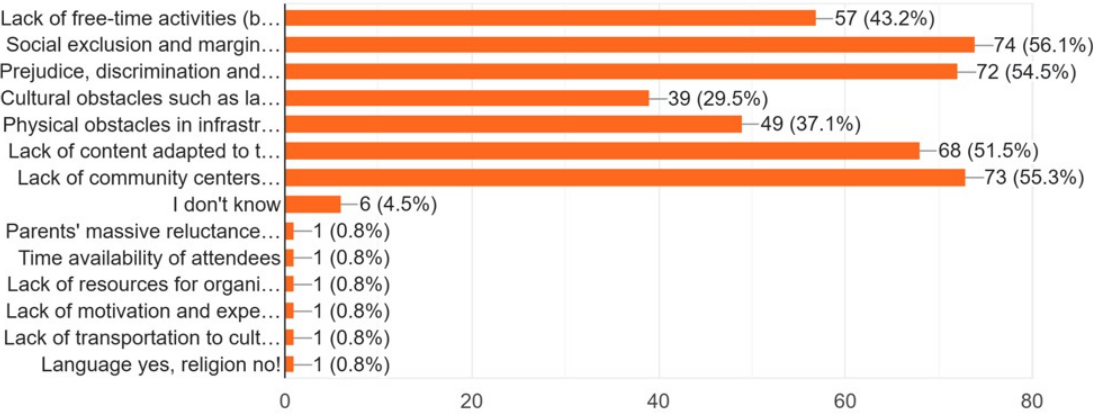
Assessing the needs of the target group

When asked about the way they assess the needs of their target group, 81.8% of the respondents said they do it through observations, 62.9% through community meetings or gatherings and 45.5% through surveys. Around one fourth of the respondents include the analysis of policies and relevant documents (28%) and consulting stakeholders such as policymakers and service providers (24.2%) in their needs assessment process. Individual answers mentioned are: casual meetings, workshops, events and camps; talking to those affected and researching the general conditions (psychological, legal, educational, etc.); studies on young people; special education support for students with disabilities; long-time observations and studying of the subject with elaborating proposals.



Challenges that YPWFO face

According to the respondents, the greatest challenges that YPWFO in their communities face in their everyday life are social exclusion and marginalisation (56.1%), lack of community centres where they could spend time with peers and youth workers (55.3%), prejudice, discrimination and intolerant behaviour (54.5%), lack of content adapted to their specific needs (51.5%) and lack of free-time activities, both educational and fun (43.2%). Significant challenges also include physical obstacles in infrastructure (37.1%) and cultural obstacles such as language and religion (29.5%), which obviously depend on the specific needs of different target groups.



Only 4.5% of the respondents answered that they don't know, while individual answers mentioned: the lack of transportation to cultural and other events; parents' massive reluctance towards activities conducted by other people with their teenagers; the time availability of attendees; lack of motivation and expectations; lack of resources for organisations and educational institutions, at the financial level.

The challenges are many and diverse, so different approaches that work on different levels are needed to address them.

Fostering inclusion through artistic and creative methods

STAYING UP TO DATE

The respondents mostly stay up to date with the latest development in their field of expertise through workshops, trainings, and seminars (81.1%) and formal and non-formal educational programs (71.2%). Literature reading is a way to keep learning for 53.8% of the respondents, attending online courses for 42.2% of them, while job shadowing for only 9.8%. A small percentage of the respondents (4.5%) feel they can't stay up to date with the latest development in their field of expertise. Some individually mentioned methods are: the exchange with other professionals and within networks, working in international projects, keeping updated about artistic activities, following the development in the field, learning autonomously and on social media.

IMPROVING SKILLS

Related to their work with YPWFO, more than half of the respondents (60.6%) want to improve their empowerment skills (e.g. the abilities to assign tasks and responsibilities to others, to give them the support and feedback they need to perform well), conflict resolution skills (56.1%) and artistic/creative skills (47.7%). These are followed by (inter)cultural competence (40.2%), prioritising inclusion (34.8%), active listening (33.3%), empathy (26.5%) and transparency and sincerity (17.4%). Other skills that the respondents want to develop include: dealing with mental impairments, assertive communication and setting boundaries, time management and legal know-how.

ARTISTIC METHODS

Almost three quarters of the respondents use Visual arts methods (72.7%) in their work with youth. Theatre, dance and movement are used by 42.4%, Literature (reading, writing) by 32.6% of the respondents and 23.5% of them use Music methods (singing and/or playing an instrument). Individual responses outside these categories are: design, hip-hop culture, film, sound and cooking. Only 13.6% of the respondents don't use art methods in their work.

Some of the visual art methods and techniques that the respondents already use are: **crafting different objects, painting, drawing, sculpting, mosaic, pottery, collage, making decorations for different occasions, weaving, laze work, crocheting, making jewellery, decoupage, line sculpting, fractal drawing as art therapy, intuitive drawing, photo voice and participatory photography, fashion, draping on the body, painting fabrics, graphic arts, DIY printing, land art, pyrography, upcycled art, artography, cyanotype, painting graffiti, making installations, visual research.**

Some more elaborated answers associated with visual arts are:

- We used intuitive painting where participants were given a topic and then led through a set of questions to express their thoughts.
- We intend to use photography to raise awareness for colonialism and discrimination.
- Photovoice is a qualitative research method used in community-based participatory research that gathers participant-taken photographs and narratives to translate experience into actionable knowledge.
- Workshop with girls: We painted pictures together (individually and without a brief) and got into conversation as a result. Questions such as "What feelings do you associate with your picture?", "Does it remind you of a certain situation?", "Is it easy for you to just start painting?"

Music methods

The music methods mentioned are: music workshops with children and youth with disabilities (playing the piano, singing exercises, rhythm exercises...), "drum circle" (group music therapy improvisation), trying different music instruments, singing well-known songs and writing new songs.

Theatre methods

Theatre methods mentioned by the respondents include: live action role play, forum theatre, improvisation theatre, image theatre, role play of the European Parliament to enhance understanding of this structure, improvisation theatre for better communication and for improving the skills to speak in front of the public, social theatre as a tool for intervention on different topics and for empowerment, making a theatre play about a project's topic, clowning dynamics, scenic games, creation of small plays, collective dramaturgy, outdoor theatre performance in the woods, theatre as a method of global learning, monologues, exercises, improvisation, creation of shows.

Audiovisual methods

Some audiovisual methods mentioned are: video creation based on different topics like minorities, cyberbullying, human rights; creating videos on topics that interest youth that can be used as education tools for others. An interesting way to use audio methods is:

- Inner monologue/dialogue on a specific European topic, which is then set to music via audio. An audio feature is created with young people, which is then played back to the young people via a podcast platform.

Literature methods

Literature methods include: reading and writing literature and poetry, reading children books, bibliotherapy, writing song lyrics. One example is:

- I use oral narration and the reading of album books to work on metaphor. My work is framed within narrative practices, and it is very important to me that they learn how to handle the tools of storytelling.

Other methods

Methods that combine different art fields include: comics, art journaling, black out poetry, digital cards, Dixit cards, Rory's story cubes, digital storytelling, and cultural routes.

One answer about using comics was:

- We use comics to overcome the fear of failure amongst young people.

Dancing and movement

Dancing and movement are used by the respondents as: dance flash mobs focusing on social issues awareness, biodanza, dance as a way to preserve immaterial cultural heritage, dance improvisation that allows each participant to move in a personal and unique way to express themselves, traditional dances, contact making sessions, corporal expression, movement sessions

More elaborate examples include:

- Dance improvisation in creating dance pieces (improvisation with focus on different tasks in finding your own dance movement and ideas which then builds final dance piece), dance technique (improving dancers skills and vocabulary), performing in public regularly, dancers creating their own artistic work.
- I usually use dance to have a bodily conception of the sensations we experience, as well as to improve interpersonal relationships.

Longer elaborated examples include:

- I used Sensory Labyrinth Theatre and also I used Drama therapy or Art therapy. I remember that I used a few years ago in a project with kids from a social centre, specific methods like drama and creative methods to help them for personal development and especially for emotional regulation and to improve their self-esteem. Labyrinth Theatre is a method that specifically uses sensoriality together with dramatic elements, having both a playful effect and an awareness of one's own abilities and also about some coping mechanisms of our emotions.
- Forum Theatre relates to the engagement of spectators influencing and engaging with the performance as both spectators and actors, termed "spect-actors", with the power to stop and change the performance. The issues dealt with in forum theatre are often related to areas of social justice, with the aim of exploring solutions to oppression featured in the performance.
- Our workshops and projects are based on Social Theatre: we carry out expressive-dramatic dynamics based on the Theatre of the Oppressed to work on the needs and desires of the group, besides being a way to promote group cohesion, creativity and self-confidence.

Some keywords mentioned about the use of artistic methods in general are: group work, playful learning, listening, sensing, fun, collaboration, play, seriousness, working on your own, aesthetic learning processes.

Some additional elaborate answers that address different aspects, bringing up new perspectives and methods:

- We start with brainstorming sessions where everyone shares their ideas and interests. This discussion helps us choose a central theme that resonates with the group, ensuring that the mural reflects their collective voice. The youth create individual sketches based on the chosen theme. We then combine elements from these sketches into a cohesive design. This stage emphasises teamwork and the blending of different artistic visions.
- Arranging exhibitions of the artwork produced by the group.
- The importance of the process versus the final product.
- I work the emotions through the knowledge of the senses and apply it to the improvement in all aspects knowing and learning to look. We work from knowledge with sustainable materials, modelling work, drawing, colour, photography, poetry and breathing.
- Workshops with a focus on connecting and communicating with oneself and with the group through creating/experimenting together on an artistic product or process, empowerment/creative self-confidence through learning new skills
- Intercultural evenings with dance, music, cooking, reflection method with drawing, creative writing, photography.
- Improvisation: with this method participants can develop creativity, quick thinking and problem-solving skills, while it also helps them to adapt to unexpected situations.

The respondents were also asked what methods they would like to use in their future work with young people with fewer opportunities. The majority would like to learn how to use Visual Arts (62.9%) and Theatre, Dance and Movement (56.1%), while Music and Literature hold 40.9% each. Only 10.6% of the respondents are not sure. Individual answers include: design, knitting, sewing and crochet, creating installations, photography, dance, theatre dynamics, crafts and handicrafts, subjects relevant for young people, dancing, cooking, organising exhibitions, social media, graphic design.

According to the respondents, the most important outcomes that a creative method should aim to achieve for the target group are:

- 1. Raise self-confidence and gain a positive self-image (88.6%)**
- 2. Develop self-expression (82.6%)**
- 3. Build a feeling of belonging to a group (67.4%)**
- 4. Foster visibility among the local community (43.2%)**
- 5. Develop patience toward the artistic process (40.2%)**
- 6. Gain artistic skills for professional development (25.8%)**
- 7. Produce quality artworks/performances (22%)**

Some individual answers offer additional insights:

- Give the young people an opportunity to express themselves through art.
- Relax, have fun, be playful, connect with creativity.
- Foster creativity, problem-solving, and introspection.
- Be better citizens in a democracy.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were also given 12 statements about artistic methods used in working with youth. They had to grade them on a scale from 1 to 5 to express how much they think they're important to foster inclusion of YPWFO.

The most important characteristic for a method to be useful and relevant (it got the highest grades), is that it encourages young people to explore new skills and ideas through art. After that, it should be fun and youth friendly, accessible to anyone and should engage young people in collective creation, respectively.

Highly rated were also the statements that say the methods should be focused on individual expression, rather than the produced artwork and transferable to different social contexts.

Moderately rated were those statements saying the methods should be simple and cheap (don't require expensive equipment). The least important criteria for a method to be useful are that it doesn't require high professionalism from the youth workers, that it's innovative and out-of-the-box, that it's visible to the local community and, lastly, that it should develop youth skills on a professional level.

What are the challenges that the respondents face in their work?

Most of the respondents listed insufficient financial resources (62.1%) as the main challenge they face in fostering inclusion in their work with YPWFO, which is followed by reaching their target group (41.7%). Highly ranked are also a lack of skilled professionals able to work with YPWFO (39.4%) and a lack of support from the local community (32.6%). Conducting needs assessment is a challenge for 18.2% of the respondents, while only 14.4% state that they don't face any significant challenge in fostering inclusion of YPWFO. Other answers include the lack of support in the youth workers' organisation/institution, structural barriers, and insufficient human resources to address all the needs of the target group.

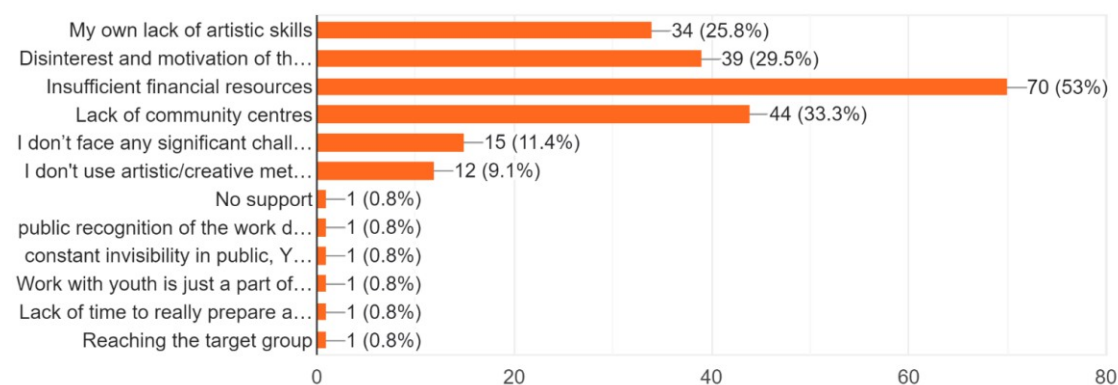
The most significant challenge, cited by 53% of respondents, remains insufficient financial resources, although this issue appears at a slightly lower percentage in the context of promoting

inclusion through art. The second most common obstacle is the lack of community centres (33.3%), followed by the low levels of interest and motivation within the target group (29.5%), and the participants' own perceived lack of artistic skills (25.8%).

Only 11.4% of respondents don't face any significant challenge, and 9.1% state that they don't use artistic/creative methods in their work with youth.

Some respondents mention no support, no public recognition of the work done, reaching the target group, lack of time (to dedicate oneself to develop new skills/to have more permanent activities/to really prepare and adapt to the target group), constant invisibility in public, and the YPWFO not daring or not interested to join in the creation of art or even be the audience of inclusion artwork.

What are the main challenges you face in fostering inclusion of YPWFO using art?
132 responses



How to overcome the challenges?

Participants were invited to describe how they address these challenges through a non-mandatory open-ended question, which received a total of 70 responses.

The answers can roughly be divided into six groups: 1. applying for financial funding, 2. lowering costs, 3. investing in developing skills and teamwork, 4. networking and collaborating, 5. investing in the motivation/engagement of youth, and 6. working on visibility.

APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL FUNDING

Examples of quotes:

- Applying to many projects that can support such activities
- Work harder to raise the money and networking are also very important
- Find donors, find workspace
- We have reached out to local authorities and other types of fundings to get some financial support. Working with YPWFO means that usually they cannot afford significant artistic experiences, so eliminating barriers such as economic cost, it's always necessary.
- Grants and organisation of activities that can provide us with more funds.
- We use a lot of fundraising methods.
- By being creative in the use of materials and looking for sponsors.

LOWERING COSTS

Examples of quotes:

- I use simple methods and public spaces available. By using at its fullest the resources I already have, I work for less money, trying to hold cost as low as possible, which sometimes affects the time I can spend on a project
- Downgrading the technical possibilities
- Looking for proposals that need little material and cheap, to be able to prioritise the payment to the professionals who make them.
- By using at its fullest the resources I already have
- I organise meetings with them in places easily accessible for me (not too far from the city I live), so that I don't need to pay for the travel to remote areas.
- By making it a priority to work with youth I can allocate more time to these activities and aim to have cheaper artistic activities (DIY, Upcycling/recycling..).
- I use simple methods and public spaces available.
- Financial resources can be offset by creative approaches and a lot of DIY. However, it remains the biggest problem.

INVEST IN TRAINING SKILLS AND TEAMWORK

Examples of quotes:

- *I improvise, go on workshops, use available materials*
- *Better time management*
- *We invest a lot of time and energy for internal and external training - every volunteer and new employee has a mentor / job coaching before start to work, during the work with young persons with disabilities and difficulties*
- *Let the youth with talent lead the way*
- *I try to follow tutorials*
- *Showing the positive effects and results of the processes so that administrations value this type of projects.*

NETWORKING AND COLLABORATIONS

Examples of quotes:

- *Seeking financing together with other collaborating entities*
- *Through networking with other organisations or individuals in our community*
- *Bringing in guests who have better artistic skills.*
- *Making constant alliances with entities and collectives, which requires a great deal of time invested (and not paid) in establishing trust and care.*
- *I have a team that I work with, and we support each other. Also, I have good and many connections with other NGOs in my country and international and I can find support in them.*
- *A clearer collaboration with local actors and institutions that can provide the proper logistics and connection with kids on a daily basis, as to encourage them to participate*
- *Connect to other youth centres*
- *I find local partners who are more experienced in art workshops*
- *Collaborating with volunteers who are experienced in art tools.*
- *A clearer collaboration with local actors and institutions that can provide the proper logistics and connection with kids on a daily basis, as to encourage them to participate.*

INVEST IN THE MOTIVATION/ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

Examples of quotes:

- *By including young people with physical impairments in professional artistic work and positioning them in identical leadership positions as people without disabilities.*
- *You bring it to them. They are not always aware of the benefits they get from participating in workshops with Art. Once involved, they participate, contribute and all, but need to be pushed sometimes.*
- *We are trying to create as many learning contexts as possible and try to go where these young people are (schools, coffee shops). This is how we try to create a connection and engage them in our activities.*
- *I create more innovative methods, more attractive to them and use a lot more visual thinking and doodling.*
- *Giving another approach, listening to the group, applying all the communication and artistic tools. Letting the person breathe and put him/herself in another place.*
- *Overcoming challenges in working with youth using artistic methods such as dance and improvisational theatre requires a variety of strategies. To address resistance to participation, it is crucial to create a safe and welcoming environment. Establishing clear and respectful rules from the beginning helps ensure a space where young people feel safe to express themselves. Starting with gentle and fun warm-up activities can make them feel more comfortable, while allowing voluntary participation gives them the freedom to choose their level of engagement.*
- *To manage the diversity of skill and experience levels, it is essential to customize activities so that they are accessible to all. Adjusting tasks according to each young person's skill level and dividing the group into smaller teams can help everyone work according to their abilities, encouraging more effective learning.*

- *In terms of emotional expression and communication, building trust and empathy is key. Implementing trust exercises through games can strengthen mutual trust among participants. In addition, facilitating reflection and feedback sessions after activities allows young people to share their experiences and feelings, promoting deeper understanding and open communication.*
- *Creating a bridge with their interests. Promoting the importance of "art heals" and offers alternative ways for the adolescent to find his/her way of expression and place in the world.*
- *To gain interest and motivation from participants, I first work to better communicate my own interest and motivation on the task at hand. I facilitate ideation and reflective exercises to bring participants to find and gather their own creative input that can go into the process, making it more personal, thus more interesting to work with.*

WORKING ON VISIBILITY

Examples of quotes:

- *Making our work and our results visible to people who could support us*
- *By persistently and continuously promoting inclusion through artistic content.*
- *I will try to promote more and to involve more social actors in this kind of projects and to be more aware about the young people needs in their communities.*
- *We open the community centre for young persons with disabilities - DIP youth club.*

The final question asked respondents to identify what would help them overcome these challenges.

As anticipated, adequate financial resources emerged as the most critical factor (65.2%). Close behind was the importance of connecting and networking with other youth workers who successfully employ artistic methods in their work with young people with fewer opportunities (61.4%). Half of the respondents think proactive policies on a local level (the county, city, village) would help them in their work (50.8%), while 46.2% listed more free educational courses and training on this topic. Some responses mention more media coverage of inclusion artistic events (in culture sections not social sections) and more human resources.

2.4. The focus groups analysis

Each of the five partners conducted focus groups and interviews (in person, online or as a hybrid form) with youth workers and other relevant experts in their community. The focus groups engaged 29 people in total.

COUNTRY	DATE	PARTICIPANTS
Croatia	13 th of June 2024	4 participants: 3 from NGOs & 1 university / NGO
Denmark	17 th of June 2024	5 participants: 4 from NGOs & 1 free-lancer
Romania	19 th of June 2024	8 participants: 2 from high school (1 teacher and 1 school consultant) & 6 youth workers from NGO
Spain	19 th of June 2024	8 participants: 3 from NGOs, 2 teachers, 2 cultural workers and 1 free-lancer journalist and social educator
Austria	3 rd , 5 th and 8 th of July 2024	4 participants from NGOs (coordinators)

The focus groups and interviews engaged in an in-depth discussion on the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, exploring their work, the artistic and creative methods employed, and the challenges encountered by both the practitioners and the young people they support.

As an introduction, the participants were asked to describe what inclusion means to them. Then they described their target group and the challenges they face in their everyday life. They were asked to talk about the challenges they face in their work and which strategies they (could) use to overcome them. Each participant described at least one artistic/creative method they use and elaborated in which way it fosters inclusion. They also further elaborated on what is important for a method to be relevant and how that can be evaluated.



Thoughts about inclusion

In the introductory part of focus groups and interviews from all participating countries, the participants shared a number of different thoughts and insights about inclusion and art as a social tool.

Some inspirational quotes emphasize the importance of inclusion not only for specific groups, but for all:

"Inclusion is a question that involves all of us – every person should be included, not only people with disabilities, migrants and other groups."

"In the moment you unplug the idea of inclusion, you accept someone else, the Other, and with that you set free not only them, but also yourself."

"Inclusion is the encounter of differences, the sharing of different gifts between people."

"The acts of inclusion are useful for everyone. If something is inclusive, anyone can use it. Why implement solutions that some people potentially cannot use?"

More probing discussions stated that inclusion is "complex and changeable", and while it is a popular topic today, few people truly understand its meaning. The interpersonal aspect of inclusion was mentioned on a group level and in a wider sense on a social level:

"Inclusion involves adaptation and bringing people together. It's about fostering diversity and creating inclusive environments. This depends on our ability to adapt and respect cultural differences."

"Inclusion is closely related to diversity. Diversity does not occur by chance; it must be actively cultivated, and inclusion should be treated with equal importance."

"Inclusion has more than one side – it needs the society, the politics, people with disabilities, with migrant background – it is a mixture"

"Society is like a cube, and everyone sees only one side, inclusion means knowing all the sides of the cube"

Participants believe that we need to build bridges and pathways to connect people.

"As we expand our knowledge, we also expand our trust."

"Inclusion is a mini process of a group process."

The relevance of art can be summarised in the following quotes:

"To me inclusion and formative experiences mean learning to see and treat each other with respect and appreciation - through creative and artistic work".

"People often adopt certain "masks" or behaviors to feel included. This process can be complex, but it can also be enjoyable if we appreciate the artistic side of these transformations. "

"Art is an inside thing, that everyone can do."





The target group

The ages of the target groups the participants work with are quite diverse. Some participants work with young people in general, some specifically with children, adolescents, high school youth and university students.

Participants from Romania, Croatia and Denmark work with the following groups of young people:

- students with physical and mental disabilities,
- children and youth with learning and developmental disabilities,
- people with partial or complete hearing and visual impairment,
- people with locomotor or vision problems,
- neurodivergent young people,
- people with support needs.

Young people from rural areas are the target group for participants from Romania, Austria and Spain. For instance, young people from remote rural areas in the mountains and small size cities.

In every focus group there were participants who work with young people with a migrant/refugee background, some of whom are underaged and live in refugee camps.

The target groups also include young people with different specific disadvantages, e.g. children and youth facing socio-economic challenges, youth with chronic illness, children and youth from single-parent families, children without parental care or separated from their parents, young people from youth care homes, children in foster care and those leaving the protection system. Besides that, the participants work with diverse ethnic and sexual minorities, vulnerable collectives in rural areas such as women, young immigrants, displaced persons and refugees.

Challenges of target groups

Accessibility

The focus group in Romania pointed out:

- difficulties in accessing cultural and youth centres for young people in rural areas;
- financial constraints not allowing them to participate in different paid
- activities, losing the chance to meet other people, which creates social isolation and social barriers;
- lack of access to resources and people who can provide support;
- lack of access to information and resources due to language barriers and not knowing where to find the information (especially for immigrants and refugees);
- lack of effective partnerships with local authorities, such as the City Hall, to facilitate access to resources;
- precarious financial situations also limit their access to various personal growth opportunities.

The focus group in Croatia mentioned:

- physical obstacles as unadjusted infrastructure (for young people with physical disabilities);
- cultural events such as theatre plays or movie projections not available to young people with disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments because the content is usually not adapted to them.

Satisfying basic needs

- the focus group from Romania emphasized that many young people cannot meet their basic needs, such as adequate food and clothing, which can generate social pressure related to wearing branded clothes, leading to social distancing.

Prejudice, stigma and exclusion

- The focus group in Croatia pointed out: prejudice is also a challenge in everyday life for young people with disabilities as they encounter social situations that are based on stereotypes and thus create uncomfortable feelings and alienation;
- some young people with mental issues face challenges in their recovery due to the stigma related to mental illness;
- both content unavailability and infrastructural obstacles are rooted in institutional policies that do not consider the needs of people with different disabilities, which is not only a matter of financial resources, but also of prejudice and lack of will in the institutional management. the Austrian participants shared that for young people with migrant/refugee background, language barrier is a challenge also

- because not being able to communicate makes them feel that they don't belong and brings frustrations and feelings of not being accepted by the local community.
- the Spanish focus group emphasised that many young people at risk of social exclusion experience an initial fear of rejection, especially in rural areas – they often believe that cultural activities are not intended for them or feel out of place due to their rural origin.

Visibility and support in schools

- These challenges were mentioned by the participants in Romania: there is a lack of support systems personnel in schools for vulnerable young people; - these young individuals often feel and are invisible to their peers, teachers, and the school system, which makes it hard for them to access projects that could provide them with valuable opportunities (the absence of dedicated personnel to support these individuals further exacerbates the issue);
- The participant from Austria that works in schools also pointed out that: the school system is not adjusting for everyone's needs, especially for the young people with a migration

- background - the classes are overcrowded and there is no mixture between locals and migrant pupils coming from a variety of countries;
- the school is not really the place where they can develop in their personal way and find their own identity.



Family and community support

- The participants from Romania pointed out: in some families and communities, young people do not receive the education they need to navigate their lives and seek information;
- in rural areas and some ethnic minority groups, conservative mentalities often prevail, where decisions must be approved by the father or husband - this can negatively impact the value placed on education and limit access to opportunities;

The focus group in Croatia mentioned that:

- some ethnic minorities face challenges related to financial stability and urban segregation, as they sometimes come from low-income families and often live in closed communities (these are reasons why cultural and educational content is also unavailable to them);
- both young people with physical and developmental disabilities are highly dependable on their parents, which can be an obstacle reducing their independence and level of engagement in cultural and educational activities (some parents face existential challenges and other hardships).

Cultural identity issues

- in Austria, young refugees and migrants are fighting with not losing their cultural identity, while adapting to the local society;
- when talking about pupils from the rural area schools, where there are mostly Austrians, they also face an identity crisis, especially boys between 15 and 17 years old.

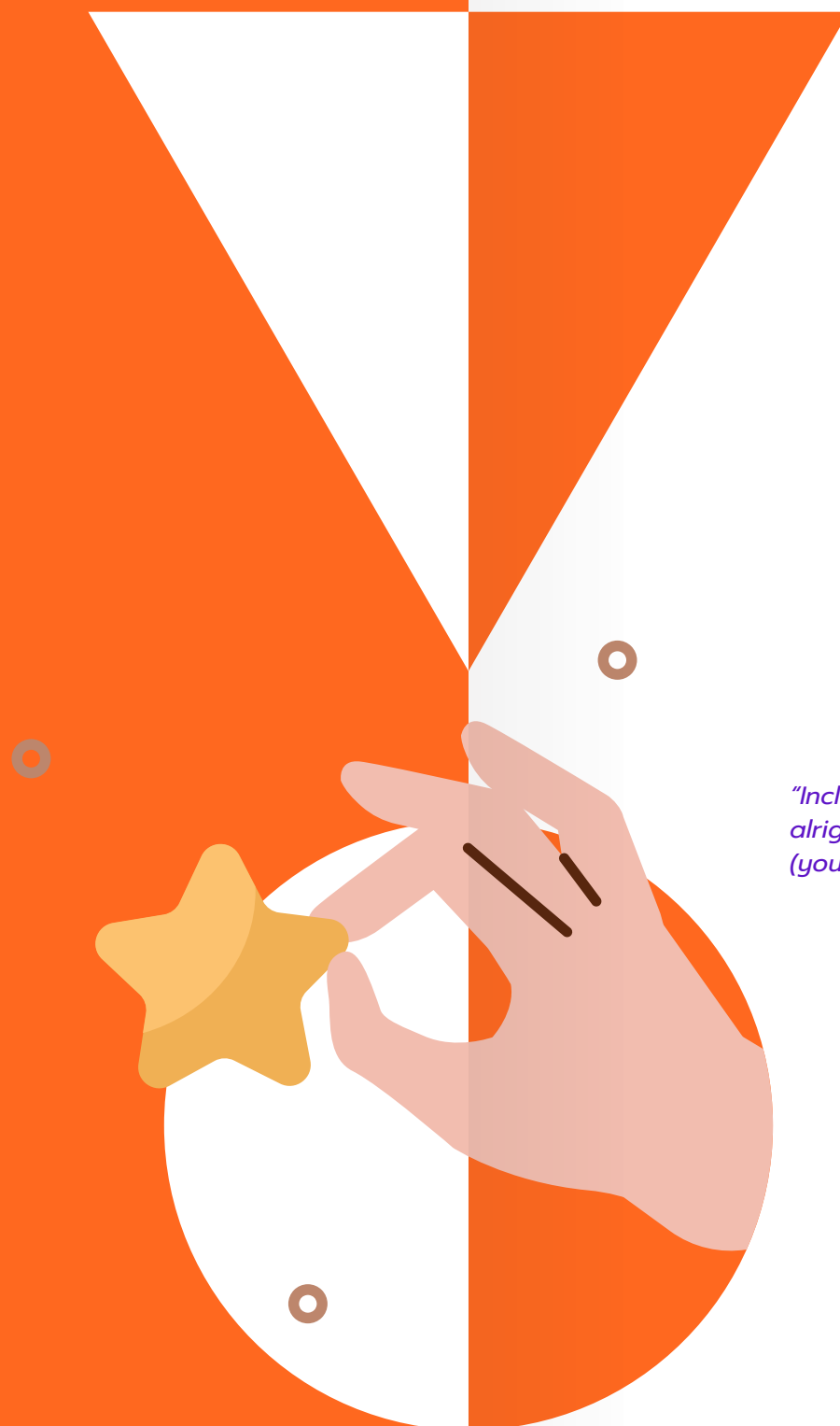
Mental health issues

- a participant from Austria has observed that devices and social media deeply affect their mental health and self-esteem;
- when discussing young people with mental and developmental disabilities, a participant from Croatia pointed out that challenges in social skills may affect their ability to engage with peers and mentors, which in turn can impact their participation in group activities.

There are many diverse challenges and obstacles that young people with fewer opportunities in the partnering countries face in their everyday life, with a negative impact on their development, well-being and sense of belonging.

Accessibility issues include limited access to cultural and youth centers, financial constraints, language barriers, and inadequate infrastructure for young people with disabilities. Satisfying basic needs remains a concern, particularly in Romania, where many young people struggle with adequate food and clothing, leading to social isolation. Prejudice, stigma, and exclusion affect young people with disabilities, mental health issues, and migrant backgrounds, often rooted in stereotypes and institutional shortcomings. Visibility and support in schools highlight the lack of dedicated personnel, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient inclusion efforts, particularly for vulnerable and migrant students. Family and community support issues arise from conservative mentalities, financial instability, and overdependence on parents, limiting opportunities and independence. Cultural identity issues impact young migrants and refugees in Austria, as well as rural youth facing identity crises. Lastly, mental health challenges such as the effects of social media, social skill deficits, and self-esteem issues further hinder engagement and participation. Addressing these interconnected challenges is crucial for fostering inclusion and empowerment among young people.

As possible solutions to these challenges, the participants talked about creating partnerships that strengthen collaboration with local authorities and NGOs to facilitate physical and logistical access to resources. There should be a support system for vulnerable young people in schools, with people dedicated to this role and promoting the importance of education in families and communities, providing orientation courses to learn how to access available resources. Programs and activities should be accessible to all young people, regardless of their financial situation, disability or place of origin.



"Inclusion and the sense of belonging and feeling alright seems to be one of the biggest challenges." (youth worker from Denmark)

Challenges of youth workers

The challenges encountered by focus groups and interviews participants in promoting inclusion when working with disadvantaged youth in non-formal contexts are:

The relationship with the group

As noted by the participants from Denmark:

- if young people are blocked by something that prevents them from working, the youth worker needs to find a way to gently open them up; sometimes the youth worker can risk taking over the project by interfering too much and preventing the young people from being responsible and developing their own

Croatian participants pointed out:

- finding creative ways to unite and engage participants despite significant differences (educational, cultural, on the level of disability, regarding interests, skills and attitudes) is important;
- the goal is to give each participant a part of the work that is appropriate to his/her abilities and affinities, while also sustaining a beneficial group dynamic.

Reaching and involving the target group

Participants from Austria and Croatia emphasised that:

- it is difficult to reach the target group when they live in closed communities, speak different languages and/or are youth with fewer opportunities that our organization usually doesn't work with.

A participant from Austria added that:

- when working with refugees it is hard to introduce them to non-formal education methods, as they are not used to this type of activities and are used only to strict formal education.

Participants from Croatia elaborated:

- once the group of young people is established, it's a challenge sometimes to sustain continuity (they stop coming for various reasons), which is an obstacle for the group stability that is required for a quality work, but it represents even a bigger problem in terms of a continuous

engagement of the young person; if there is no diversity in the group (e.g. people without disabilities are not joining activities for people with disabilities), the question raises whether inclusion is really achieved.

A participant from Spain noted: keeping the motivation of young people to participate demands encouraging them and accompanying them throughout the creative process.

Unsystematic approaches and small initiatives

The participants from all the partnering countries except Denmark emphasized the lack of continuous and secure support and funding through systematic approach as a prevailing challenge.

A participant from Romania noted:

- punctual and small initiatives do not produce significant results - there is a lack of a strategic and systemic approach in working with disadvantaged young people;

A participant from Austria summarised:

- the lack of funding and planning makes the projects unsustainable - youth workers should be able to work with groups for a longer period of time without worrying about finances and being able to offer all the activities for free;

Participants from Spain argued that:

- the lack of enough financial resources leads to working with unsuitable materials, unqualified staff and without covering the required needs of vulnerable groups;
- projects carried out are sometimes dealing with lack of human resources and precariousness overtime;

Participants from Croatia elaborated that:

- financial obstacles are a pervasive challenge, and the project coordinators are always trying out different ways to collect funds, which takes a lot of time and energy;
- projects that highly depend on the personal drive of individuals also face sustainability challenges.

Lack of support for youth workers

Participants from Romania pointed out:

- there is a need for greater support, including material resources and mentoring, for those working with disadvantaged young people;
- youth workers face risks of burnout and demotivation due to intense efforts without adequate support.

A participant from Croatia mentioned:

- youth workers lack knowledge and experience when working with a target group that has specific needs, especially if it's a vulnerable group (e.g. addressing gender, sexuality and identity issues in an appropriate way, working with different ethnic groups and minorities, children whose parents are abroad etc.);

Participants of the focus group in Austria noted that:

- Cultural mediation and language-sensitive communication training are needed as young people who do not speak German fluently often fear making mistakes and being judged, which can hinder their engagement, so youth workers must first address this issue before moving on to other aspects of their work

“A significant challenge for youth workers is maintaining their own well-being. Youth workers frequently give so much of themselves to support and guide young people that they may neglect their own mental and physical health. Consequently, it's essential for youth workers to have access to resources and strategies to manage stress and prevent burnout.” (youth worker from Romania)

Lack of community involvement

This challenge was especially spoken in the Romanian focus group:

- there is a difficulty of mobilizing all local actors and collaborating effectively with parents to demonstrate the long-term benefits of non-formal activities;
- resistance and scepticism - the community may be sceptical towards the youth projects due to the perception that projects are temporary and do not bring long-term benefits, so it is challenging to demonstrate the sustainable impact of these projects on both young people and the community;
- volunteers have to cover their own primary needs, which can limit the time and energy they can devote to inclusion activities;
- negative perceptions of volunteering such as association with patriotic work from the communist era in Romania or perceived as elitist and only accessible to young people who already have stability and balance in their lives.

A participant from Croatia also referred to this challenge:

- it's a challenge to encourage cultural institutions to implement the required adjustments to achieve inclusion.

Integration into the educational system

- it is challenging to introduce non-formal activities into an already busy school schedule, said a participant from Romania;
- usually there is no exchange between the school system and non-formal education methods and teaching the pupils to think critically and using more creative methods to express themselves, expressed a participant from Austria.

“Another challenge is to reach parents and show them that we want to help young people develop and have more opportunities in the future.” (youth worker from Romania)

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Possible solutions to challenges

The focus group participants also gave some possible solutions and key actions they take to overcome the challenges they encounter:



CUSTOMIZED METHODS, INDIVIDUAL APPROACH AND FLEXIBILITY

The participants highlighted the importance of using tailored methods and approaches to engage young people effectively and ensure the success of activities. Flexibility, creativity, and innovation are essential for managing group diversity, while an individualised approach is necessary to assign tasks that align with each young person's abilities. Cultural activities should be adapted to the interests of the group, and as their needs evolve, adjustments must be made. Participants emphasised the need for clear distinctions between teaching, training, and mentoring, as different methods yield different results. A balance must be achieved between challenging the group, setting expectations for quality, providing feedback, and offering sufficient support. Finally, fostering a cooperative relationship between mentors and mentees, where both are equal partners, is crucial for success.

"We must be aware of all the changes in their lives (of young people), in the community, in society, and equip ourselves with the necessary tools to be able to help and cope." (a youth worker from Romania)

EMPATHY, SENSITIVITY AND OBSERVATION

The participants highlighted the importance of treating all young people with fairness and respect, particularly regarding their gender identity, to create an inclusive and safe environment. Recognising and valuing individual differences while fostering collaboration and tolerance contributes to positive group dynamics. A humane and empathetic attitude, combined with active listening and attention, is crucial for understanding the challenges young people face, as well as for identifying their real needs through careful observation of their personal stories and experiences. Additionally, fostering care and empathy among young people is essential. Educating them about respecting and maintaining shared spaces, along with managing community resources sustainably, promotes responsibility and environmental consciousness. Furthermore, changing perceptions of migrants, especially in rural communities, is vital, as they are often seen as both part of the local population and as "outsiders," which can affect their self-esteem and sense of belonging, particularly among younger individuals.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

The participants pointed out the need for securing stable and long-term funding to support sustained engagement in their activities. They identified local government funding and programmes such as Erasmus+ as key sources of financial support.

CONTINUOUS TRAINING OF YOUTH WORKERS

The participants highlighted the importance of keeping knowledge up to date to stay in touch with changes in young people's lives and their communities. Providing training for youth workers to work well with young people with fewer opportunities was seen as essential. Building connections with experts and organisations was also valued for gaining useful knowledge and creating important networks. Finally, having an open and willing attitude towards learning was considered very helpful in this process.

"The trainers/trainers/mentors also often benefit from being a part of a professional group to have someone to reflect with." (a youth worker from Denmark)

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The participants stated that it is important to work closely with key community stakeholders, such as schools, entrepreneurs, parents, local institutions, and town halls. As crucial steps they point out establishing mentoring strategies at the school level and forming partnerships with local NGOs or institutions that support young people with fewer opportunities. Collaboration among professionals, including artists, social workers, and psychologists, was emphasised to maximise the benefits of teamwork. Additionally, key priorities for them are promoting ongoing participation in community activities and keeping the idea of community at the centre of initiatives. To achieve this, the perception of volunteering should change, it should be more accessible and attractive to all young people, regardless of their socio-economic status.

ACCESSIBILITY AND VISIBILITY

Several strategies for improving accessibility and participation in youth activities were highlighted. In Austria, one participant shared that offering activities in multiple languages (Spanish, English, and easy German) made them more inclusive. Keeping activities free of charge and increasing the visibility of youth centres within the community were also seen as crucial in all countries. Mobile caravans were identified by the Romanian participants as an effective idea to reach young people at access points. Visibility in the local community often attracts new private donors, while adapting activity names (e.g., "urban dances" instead of "contemporary dance") can help generate interest. Additionally, well-designed participation mechanisms play an important role in encouraging young people to get involved.

The group concluded that these strategies and methods are essential to address current challenges and support the harmonious development of young people and the communities in which they live.

The challenges highlight the need for stronger support for youth workers, strategic and systemic approaches and better collaboration with the community and parents to ensure the success and sustainability of inclusion initiatives.

*“Art is not school and there is no grade for it.”
(youth worker from Austria)*

Throughout the five focus groups, the participants mentioned a wide range of artistic and creative methods they use when working with young people with fewer opportunities.

Among the art fields, media and creative methods used there are: theatre, dancing, music, creative writing, painting, sculpture, photography, collage, radio, costume design, gamification, board games.

The outcomes, aims and objectives of using creative methods are also diverse. They vary from self-expression and introspection, fostering self-esteem and a sense of worth, to dealing with social issues such as gender justice, intercultural exchange and sustainability. The joint creation that some methods provide is quite important because it can develop group cohesion, social and communication skills, tolerance, empathy and collaboration.

THEATRE AND DANCE

Theatrical tools and dance can engage children and youth in precarious situations through creative expression. For instance, in rural areas it can be a platform for youth to express themselves.

Drama and dancing can also serve as powerful tools to focus on different topics such as mental health, addictions, gender violence etc. Using these methods the young people are more open and engaged and are more participative in the activities.

Dance and theatre can also help young people build confidence, develop social skills and enhance their awareness.



Some of the methods mentioned include:

- Sensory labyrinth theatre. This method involves the creation of an interactive theatrical space where participants are invited to explore and engage in various scenarios and stories. Through this technique, participants develop their cooperation and communication skills, contributing to better inclusion in the group.
- Improvisation theatre. Theatrical improvisation encourages creativity and spontaneity, allowing participants to open up and connect more easily with each other. This technique helps to build an environment of trust and collaboration, which is essential for inclusion.
- LARP (Live Action Role-Playing). The total impersonation of a character allows participants to assume different roles and explore new perspectives. This method fosters empathy and understanding of diversity, contributing to inclusion in the target group.
- Storytelling. Creative storytelling is used to share experiences and create emotional connections between participants. Through storytelling, an atmosphere of solidarity and inclusion develops within the group. Storytelling techniques and role-playing with students with disabilities or specific requirements helps them prepare for different situations and how to assess them.
- Drama workshops with people with different disabilities. Inspired by the forum theatre methodology, short performances are created that deal with social topics, interpreting the participants' real-life situations in which they faced discrimination and stigmatization. The drama group also performs poetry recitals, with each member memorizing a part of a contemporary, impactful poem that becomes meaningful to them through rehearsals. Their work culminates in a public presentation, a significant and exciting moment despite some pre-performance stress. Another example is a performance using improvised instruments, enhanced by relaxation

- techniques like method acting, vocalizations, deep breathing, and body relaxation to improve focus and connect with the senses. These activities foster attention, presence, and group cohesion, essential for artistic creation and personal growth.
- Dance in the classroom. Integrating dance into education for adolescents within an urban context, fostering creativity, physical activity, and socio-emotional learning. Dance programs can support physical and emotional development in schools.
- Traditional dances. For the participant in Austria that is working with refugees, music and dancing are the main methods he is using. Even though he is not a dancer, he is inviting the refugees to show their traditional dances and, in this way, starts a communication with them. As they are proud to show their culture and traditions, they also become more open to discuss other topics and learn from the others, as he is bringing them in international contexts where the refugees and other European young people meet.



MUSIC

The music lessons don't only teach music, they develop memory and concentration. Besides playing an instrument, singing, rhythmic exercises and movement can be used. Music can also be a good means of engaging people from different cultures, even when there's a language barrier.

Methods shared by Croatian participants include:

- An inclusive music band. The band was formed through free music workshops for the city's Roma minority and other disadvantaged youth. The idea was to give disadvantaged children and youth an opportunity to engage in a group activity that is fun and educational, to make music available to them. The group combines traditional Roma music with other types of music, playing mostly percussion instruments. The group regularly performs at different events. The project fosters inclusion by engaging marginalized youth with other young people in joined creative creation, while the concerts contribute to their visibility and potentially break stereotypes and prejudice.
- Music workshops with children and youth with developmental difficulties. The work is based on building a relationship with them, collaboration and creating joint attention, while adapting the activities to the individual needs of pupils (for instance, if someone is too sound sensitive and doesn't react well to some instrument or a piano register). The youth also really like to perform and that's a good way to foster



VISUAL, AUDIO AND AUDIOVISUAL ARTS

Visual arts like painting, drawing and sculpting allow people to "talk" with their hands, to find their own artistic voice, without knowing in advance what it looks like. For instance, one participant shared that when working with collage and painting, some boys from the group discovered that they were artistically inclined and continued painting after that. On the other hand, photography is accessible to people who are not skilled in techniques such as drawing etc., while offering many creative options (e.g. working with a portrait of yourself through photo collage).

Sound and audiovisual tools also provide mediums for creative expression and skill development, engaging young minds creatively. A participant from Spain gave an example of a one-year school program with young migrants coming from sheltered centres with or without criminal records in which positive changes were noticed.

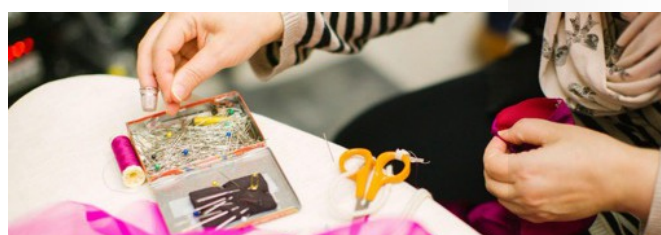
A participant from Austria uses workshops in schools mostly to talk about active citizenship, with a focus on European values. By using different creative methods such as radio and collage, the group deals with sensitive topics like gender issues and gender equality:

- Radio: it is used as a tool to discuss different topics. When working with young people with a migrant background, sometimes they are encouraged to use their mother tongue to get in contact with their thoughts. In this way, they can express themselves more freely, as sometimes they are shy to use German. It is a good opportunity for them to talk in their mother tongue without being judged and to share their language with others.
- Collage: the youngsters create a collage on a topic or statement, which is an interesting process from the moment they start thinking about it, looking through the magazines for pictures and because of the pictures they get more and more into the topic and discuss between each other, as they are working in groups. In the end they are very proud of the resulting collage, as at the beginning they think they cannot do it. After that they have a discussion on the topic having as a base the colleges they have made, so it is much easier to talk about these topics having this creative process beforehand.

Another participant from Austria works with Latino American community members, but also with young people from across the world, and uses artistic methods such as collage, drawing and painting to teach them German:

"The main focus of the workshops is to make the participants feel good, relaxed and create a non-judgmental place where everyone is welcomed, no matter the language level and artistic skills, their philosophy is that everyone is an artist."

Besides language learning courses, another interesting way to use creative methods mentioned by the participants is to talk about sustainability issues. With clothes upcycling, designing and creating costumes from clothes, young people use their creativity to convert their clothes and accessories, becoming more aware of how they could be more sustainable in everyday life. The repairing and reusing of fabric can raise the topic of sustainability in the fast fashion industry, while on the other hand it can be fun to create a photo shoot with the creations and costumes.



ART THERAPY

Artistic methods can be used as a form of therapy, focusing mostly on the person and the process rather than on the result. This method should help participants express emotions and overcome psychological barriers, promoting mutual understanding and facilitating inclusion in the target group. Various art forms can be used, like visual arts, drama, music or even clowning. The skills don't matter that much, but rather the connection among young people and their emotions. It is very important to create a safe space where clear instructions are given and rules are set, so sensitive information should not be shared outside of the group.

CREATIVE WRITING

The participant from Austria that works with refugees also shared his experience with creative writing. It turned into a self-reflection as the young people created their characters based on their own issues and the challenges they are facing. Sometimes very dark thoughts were expressed and processed in these sessions. Even though they wouldn't read the stories out loud, it was an individual process that made them feel lighter at the end. He believes that this method is powerful when it works but can only be done with a small number of people from his target group due to the language and writing skills, since some of them don't even know how to write in their mother tongue.

INCLUSIVE CULTURAL PRACTICES

A Croatian participant is leading a project promoting inclusive cultural practices, focusing on making film, theater, and literature accessible to disadvantaged groups, particularly people with hearing and visual impairments. By raising awareness among cultural institutions, film distributors, and the public, the project drives change through activities like creating audio descriptions for theater performances and inclusive movie screenings. Years of advocacy have led to greater adoption of inclusive practices by cultural institutions. Additionally, a cultural youth council was established to unite young people from diverse backgrounds, offering monthly meetings to develop skills, share experiences, and support cultural inclusion efforts.

To conclude, the participants see artistic and creative methods as a tool to discuss different topics, while finding them essential to help the group open up and support the knowledge part, which contributes to a more inclusive and creative education.

*"Non formal education is the key to get in touch with the young people and help them open up."
(youth worker from Austria)*

Evaluating the methods

Evaluating the success of methods to promote inclusion can be achieved through various means.

THE PROCESS AND THE RESULTS

There should be a balance between evaluating the process and outcome in art projects, which means that comprehensive evaluation should consider personal impact as well as aesthetic outcome and institutional perception. Both the personal experience of the young people and the perception of the quality of the work of the professionals involved should be evaluated. Evaluation can determine whether the young people felt like protagonists, and felt empowered and valued during the process. A concrete example from Spain is mentioned, in which the final presentation of the work was shown in the main auditorium of the Prado Museum. This allowed the participants to feel empowered and transformed their perception of the institution. This final outcome had a significant impact on the evaluations of the participants, who highlighted this event as a memorable and transformative moment.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Furthermore, the emphasis is on evaluating long-term impact to truly understand the scope and effectiveness of these projects in the lives of the people involved. Measuring the success of an art-based cultural project should not be limited to immediate outcomes but consider how participants continue to interact with art and culture in the future.

OBSERVATIONS AND FEEDBACK

Another aspect of evaluating success is measuring changes in behaviour and attitudes through observations and feedback (both from participants and their parents).

One participant (a youth worker and psychologist from Austria) shared an example from their practice, which aimed to evaluate children's behaviour by assessing group communication, empathy levels, and knowledge. This process involved direct observation and constant evaluation of the participants' progress through specific professional tools used by psychologists.

Another example given in the Romanian focus group was: after participating in a mobility, the minors were involved in writing and developing new projects and obtained funding for European projects, while feedback from parents indicated positive changes in children's behaviour and attitudes.

A measure of success is also the continued interest of participants, as shown by their repeated participation in similar activities, often with the same facilitators.

In conclusion, the success of artistic and creative methods to promote inclusion can be measured by:

- **Observation and evaluation of long-term behaviour.**
- **Continuity of involvement of participants in similar projects.**
- **Feedback from participants and parents.**
- **Positive changes observed in communication, empathy and cognition.**



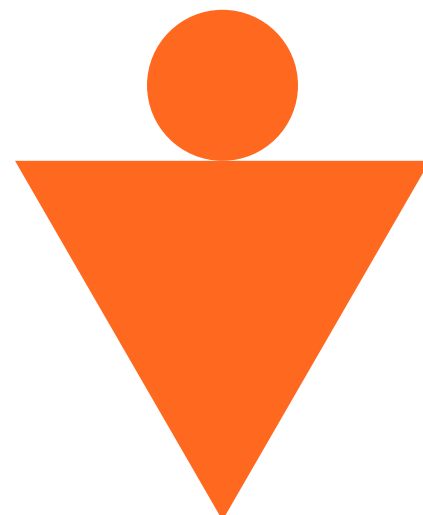
3

Good Practice Examples

To compile a diverse collection of best practices that can be adapted and implemented by different partners across various settings, each partner conducted desk research on the already existing methods in their countries.

This section outlines best practices used across the European Union to promote social inclusion among young people facing obstacles, including those from rural areas, with disabilities, or from refugee and immigrant backgrounds. It emphasizes the significance of creative and artistic methods in facilitating expression, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding.

By mapping and describing these innovative approaches, the aim is to showcase their effectiveness in fostering inclusive communities and to encourage their broader implementation to enhance social cohesion within Europe.



Criteria for Selection of Practices:

Relevance

The practice directly addresses social inclusion among young people with fewer opportunities through creative and artistic methods.

Impact

Evidence of positive outcomes on the target group, such as improved social skills, increased self-esteem, or greater community cohesion.

Innovation

Introduction of new ideas, methods, or approaches that could inspire further initiatives.

Sustainability

The ability of the practice to be maintained over time, including considerations of funding, partnerships, and community support.

Inclusivity

Ensuring that practices are accessible to all young people, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Participation

Active involvement of young people in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the practice.

3.1. Romania

Forum Theatre – a tool to stimulate civic engagement

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Forum theatre
Gender issues
Violence prevention

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

A.R.T. Fusion



SUMMARY

The main aim of this project is to encourage teenagers to become active citizens on gender inequality. The project brought discussions about gender inequality in high schools using the Forum Theatre method. It created a space for dialogue, where students were invited to identify and propose solutions. At the end of the performances, the audience was encouraged to get actively involved when they witnessed such situations. The discussions and reflections opened a space for them to explore their experiences of gender inequality and find ways in which they can combat these abuses.

HOW IT WORKS

- The project uses the Forum Theatre method to bring issues of gender inequality to the forefront, using scenarios based on students' real-life experiences.
- The performances were followed by interactive discussions in which students were invited to propose solutions to the issues presented on stage.
- The project was also adapted to the online environment, with in-depth discussion sessions to explore alternative behaviours and solutions.

WHY IT WORKS

The project succeeds in actively engaging young people on topical issues such as gender inequality, using an interactive and participatory method such as Forum Theatre. It creates a safe framework for dialogue and exploration, stimulating creativity and empathy, and providing young people with tools to act in such situations. In addition, its adaptability to the online environment has shown that the method can be effective even in difficult conditions, ensuring continuity of discussion and young people's involvement.

LINK: <https://artfusion.ro/portfolio/forum-theater-as-tool-to-stimulate-civic-involvement/>

3.1. Romania

F.U.S.I.O.N - We Put On A Show In Our Town

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Social theatre
Raising awareness of youth violence
Teenagers from social care and foster care centres
Public performance

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

AVATAR Association, ARCUB



SUMMARY

Bullying and cyberbullying are common phenomena among teenagers, having a profound impact on their development. The project pays attention not only to the victims, but also to those who generate these behaviours, especially young people in foster care, offering them constructive alternatives through art and theatre. The project offers creative freedom to teenagers, turning their experiences into stories and cultural products. This artistic approach helps raising awareness of youth violence, both online and offline, through an accessible and relevant cultural product with a significant impact on a diverse audience.

HOW IT WORKS

- The project aims to combat and prevent bullying, cyberbullying and youth violence through cultural education.
- 15 institutionalized young people from Romania performed a play inspired by their lives on the stage of theatres in Bucharest.
- The project provided emotional support and created a safe environment for their artistic expression.

WHY IT WORKS

The project brings value by integrating a variety of social theatre techniques, combining drama, music, rhythm and reinterpreted classic stories. The innovative approach through storytelling and the Basket Beat method contribute to the reflection the experiences of institutionalized adolescents in the post-pandemic era.

3.1. Romania

4 Senses

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Labyrinth theatre
Young people with hearing and speech impairments
Basket beat method

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

AVATAR Association, Foundation for Civil Society Development, Sfânta Maria Special Secondary School in Bucharest, Special High School for Hearing Impaired Children Buzău, School Center for Inclusive Education "Elena Doamna" Focșani



SUMMARY

The "4 SENSES" project aims to facilitate access for young people with hearing and speech impairments to cultural products in the field of performing arts, while supporting them in artistic expression through innovative methods. The project involves basket beat workshops, labyrinth theatre and street campaigns, where young people with hearing and speech impairments become both participants and creators of art.

HOW IT WORKS

Through creative activities and performances, these young people have the opportunity to develop their artistic skills and express their own reality through innovative methods. They take part in activities including sensory maze theatre and the basket beat method, where they can express their creativity and connect through vibrations and rhythms.

WHY IT WORKS

The "4 SENSES" project works because it harnesses the creative potential of young people with hearing and speech impairments, integrating them into accessible cultural experiences. The innovative methods used, such as basket beat and labyrinth theatre, enable young people to perceive art through their senses, giving them a platform for artistic expression while raising awareness among the public. Activities are tailored to their needs, and through the creative camp, young people from different cities meet and collaborate to create artistic products.

LINK: [F.U.S.I.O.N. - Facem Un Spectacol In Oraşul Nostru - Ateliere de Storytelling \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

LINK: <https://asociatia-avator.ro/4-senses/>

3.1. Romania

SILENT THEATRE

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Sign language theatre
Social integration of young people with hearing impairment
Accessible culture

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

AVATAR Association, Association for Education "aRtelier 2020",
Special Vocational School for the Hearing Impaired "Sfânta Maria", Replika Educational Theatre Center (Romania)



SUMMARY

The SILENT THEATRE project integrates young people with hearing impairments into the cultural sphere through the use of sign language in theatre. The main aim is to facilitate their access to culture while developing their artistic expression skills. The project includes workshops, performances and short films, all adapted to be accessible to both deaf and hearing-impaired people. This project not only allows them to participate in cultural experiences, but also to become active creators in the artistic field.

HOW IT WORKS

The project uses sign language not only as a means of communication, but also as a form of artistic expression in theatre.

By participating in workshops in sign language and drama, young people with hearing impairments become creators of cultural content and their artistic products are promoted and accessible to the general public.

This innovative approach demonstrates that art can be a powerful tool for social integration and inter-human communication.

WHY IT WORKS

It is an example of good practice because it offers a model of cultural integration through innovative and inclusive methods. Sign language becomes not only a means of communication but also an artistic tool, making the project transferable to other cultural contexts. By actively involving young people in the creation of cultural products, the project contributes to their personal development and to sensitizing the community to the needs of people with hearing impairments.

LINK: <https://asociatia-avatar.ro/4-senses/>

3.2. Austria

Creative Minds

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Photography
Self-expression
Empowerment

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Vienna Jugendinfo (Vienna Youth Information), local photography studios



SUMMARY

Creative Minds Vienna offers photography workshops for young people aged 16-21 from disadvantaged backgrounds. The project aims to empower participants through artistic expression and develop photography skills. Professional photographers mentor participants, guiding them in capturing their stories and perspectives through the lens.

HOW IT WORKS

Outreach to local youth centres and schools in under-resourced neighbourhoods.

The project offers weekly workshops covering camera basics, composition, and storytelling through photography, as well as mentorship sessions with professional photographers.

Group exhibitions showcasing the participants' work in public spaces are organized.

WHY IT WORKS

By being open to young people regardless of background with minimal cost barriers, the project addresses inclusion directly. The active involvement of youth in workshops, the creative process, and potentially exhibition curation helps building their self-esteem, encourages social interaction, and provides a platform for self-expression. The project combines mentorship with public exhibitions, potentially inspiring similar projects, and relies on external funding and partnerships.

https://www.wienextra.at/fileadmin/web/oea/pdf_2020/ueber_uns_EN_2020/wienextra_Medienzentrum_EN_2020.pdf

3.2. Austria

Die Brunnenpassage

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Art workshop
Social inclusion
Cultural exchange

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Caritas Vienna



SUMMARY

This initiative transforms a school into a social art space, offering various art workshops and projects for young people from diverse backgrounds. It aims to foster social inclusion and cultural exchange through creative activities. The project is held in Vienna and targets young people from marginalised communities.

HOW IT WORKS

Outreach to local youth centres and schools in under-resourced neighbourhoods.

The project offers weekly workshops covering camera basics, composition, and storytelling through photography, as well as mentorship sessions with professional photographers.

Group exhibitions showcasing the participants' work in public spaces are organized.

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LINK: <https://www.brunnenpassage.at/about-us/kunst-fuer-alle>

3.2. Austria

Superar - Musical Movement for Social Integration

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Music education
Social inclusion
Youth empowerment
Community building

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Superar Association, Caritas of the Archdiocese of Vienna, Vienna Concert Hall, Vienna Boys' Choir



SUMMARY

Superar is a European initiative based in Austria that provides free musical education to children and young people, aiming to foster social integration and equal opportunities. It offers programs in singing, instrumental lessons, and dance, designed to help participants develop their potential, strengthen self-confidence, and learn the value of disciplined work within a community.

HOW IT WORKS

- Superar provides early childhood musical education (starting from the age of two), focusing on dance, singing, and orchestral training.
- All children, regardless of background, have the opportunity to participate in a supportive environment.
- Through collective music-making and dancing, young people experience the motivating energy of teamwork and collective success.

WHY IT WORKS

It directly addresses social inclusion by providing equal access to music education for all children, helping to bridge social divides. Participants gain musical skills, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging through disciplined group activities. The initiative combines high-quality musical education with social integration, supported by esteemed cultural institutions. Backed by reputable institutions like Caritas, Vienna Concert Hall, and the Vienna Boys' Choir, ensuring long-term support and quality.

LINK: <https://www.caritas-wien.at/hilfe-angebote/zusammenleben/kunst-fuer-alle/superar>

3.2. Austria

Der Fliegende Teppich

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Refugee integration
Visual arts
Cultural identity
Community engagement

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Wien Museum, local artists Laleh Monsef and Rahman Hawy, refugee support organisations



SUMMARY

"The Flying - Magic Carpet - Please Stay in Vienna" is an art project where young refugees in Vienna created an exhibition for the Wien Museum, inspired by the tale of the flying carpet from the Arabian Nights. The project aimed to provide these young people with a platform to express their experiences and reflections on their lives in Vienna through art. Meeting weekly, the participants used visual arts as a medium to explore themes of home, displacement, and belonging, juxtaposing their personal stories with their experiences of being newcomers in Vienna.

HOW IT WORKS

The young refugees met once a week for two hours in art sessions led by artists, which offers them a place to rest, reflect, and creatively express their life stories and experiences of integration through visual arts.

The artworks were compiled into an exhibition displayed at the Wien Museum, showcasing the participants' perspectives on their past homes and their lives in Vienna. The exhibition served as a platform for the young people to share their narratives with a wider audience.

The project facilitated cultural exchange by allowing the young refugees to engage with the broader community. Through their art, they communicated their realities of flight, the challenges of being newcomers, and their hopes for the future.

WHY IT WORKS

The project directly addresses social inclusion by giving young refugees a voice and a platform to express their personal journeys. It acknowledges their experiences and validates their feelings, which is crucial for their integration and well-being.

Participants improved their communication skills, self-expression, and teamwork. They also gained a sense of contributing to something bigger than themselves, enhancing their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

By creatively tying together the timeless tale of the flying carpet with contemporary issues of migration and integration, the project offers a unique cultural perspective. It bridges traditional storytelling with modern experiences, making it relatable and engaging.

Supported by the Wien Museum and local artists, the project had a lasting impact by raising awareness of refugee experiences in Vienna. Although not all participants may be allowed to stay in Vienna, the project immortalises their stories and contributes to ongoing conversations about inclusion.

LINK: https://www.wienmuseum.at/der_fliegende_teppich

3.3. Croatia

From Dump to Art: Confronting Illegal Waste Dumping

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Raising awareness through art
Rural youth
Environment protection
Recycled art

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

[Suma Association](https://www.udrugasuma.hr/)



SUMMARY

The initiative's goal is to foster responsibility for environment protection in the local community, raise awareness of the harmful impact of illegal waste dumping and, with the use of art and film, develop a model to replicate the project in other rural settings. The project is carried out in three rural localities in Croatia, Hungary, and Serbia, underscoring the significance of cross-border collaboration in addressing mutual challenges.

HOW IT WORKS

- By engaging the local community, the participants tackle the issue of illegal waste dumping, demonstrating the power of collaboration in a democracy.
- Through practical activities, the local youth understand environmental concerns and learn effective waste management.
- Art and films raise awareness about the issue, emphasizing the importance of voicing concerns and sharing views.
- Exhibitions in public spaces highlight that such places are platforms for learning, dialogue, and community growth.
- Collaborating with NGOs, schools, and other local stakeholders, the project showcases effective community cooperation.

WHY IT WORKS

The project offers young people a chance to be the initiators of positive change in their community. By using recycled materials and video activism, they can express their creativity and learn about sustainability, while also develop tools for other groups to replicate in their communities. long-term support and quality.

LINKS: <https://www.udrugasuma.hr/projekt.php?rbr=4>

3.3. Croatia

#InkluLab

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Inclusion of people with disabilities
Art workshops and educations
Promoting inclusion

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

[Radiona Association](#)



SUMMARY

#InkluLAB-innovative art and cultural practices is an interdisciplinary program that consists of hybrid arts, sound art, interactive design, electronic textiles, computer art, new media, fine arts, and performing arts, as well as the methodological development of approaches when working with people with intellectual difficulties. The program consists of a series of workshops, lectures, public events and performances, which have been fully developed and adapted for people with intellectual disabilities. One of these activities was about creating tactile picture books for blind and partially sighted people.

HOW IT WORKS

A tactile picture book is a book that can be read with the fingers. The images in the tactile picture book consist of raised shapes in different materials. The term tactile is used to describe how information is conveyed by touch. A tactile picture book is usually a new version of an already existing picture book or story.

Tactile picture books are primarily intended for visually impaired people, but they can also be used and enjoyed by people with other and without disabilities. Picture books are of great importance for the development of every person – child, young or adult.

WHY IT WORKS

Young people with total or partial blindness actively participate in the process of knowledge transfer, working together with the mentors on a story or stories and ways to turn it into a tactile book, intended for blind people.

LINKS: <https://inklulab.eu/>

3.3. Croatia

In the same film – one step further

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Children and young people with disabilities
Advocacy and guidelines ([Methodological Framework for the adaptation of cultural contents](#))
[Sensory cinema projections, photography and animation workshops](#)

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

[Metamedij Association](#)



SUMMARY

The project is aimed at solving the problem of sensory inadequacy and unavailability of common cultural content for children and youth with developmental disabilities. Sensory differences often make it difficult to participate in social interactions, social events and cinema screenings, which requires adaptation of the content to the needs and specifics of people with developmental disabilities.

HOW IT WORKS

To increase the availability of cultural content for marginalized groups and create an inclusive environment, the methodological guidelines for adaptations of cultural contents were made and are available for free. The document is based on needs assessment research conducted with parents of children and with developmental disabilities.

Various activities adapted to the target group were organized: 19 sensory cinema screenings and 5 creative workshops were held (creative digital portrait photography workshops, a series of exhibitions of participants' works throughout Croatia, and stop-motion animations and improvised music sessions), involving more than 1,500 participants.

The final result of these activities was a short animated film that was shown as part of the "Neighborhood Cinema" program. Through these activities, children and youth with developmental disabilities not only participated as audience, but also as creatives and artists.

WHY IT WORKS

The project ensured the increased inclusion of people with disabilities in cultural activities through the creation of guidelines, the organization of adapted programs and effective advocacy. These results emphasize the importance of continuous work on inclusion and adaptation of cultural content, to ensure the equal participation of all citizens in cultural life.

LINKS: <https://metamedia.hr/en/category/in-the-same-film/>

3.3. Croatia

Fairytelling around the world

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED
Inclusion of youth with migrant/refugee background
Intercultural exchange
Storytelling
Intangible cultural heritage

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
[Are You Syrious?](#)



SUMMARY

Discovering fairy tales from other cultures reminds us that the world of imagination and the lessons from tales are common to everyone, regardless of language and the culture we come from. "Fairytelling Around the World" is a journey around the world - through fairy tales. It gathered young people from four different countries that tried to find a way to bring fairy tales from their cultures to local youth, despite the language barrier.

HOW IT WORKS

The target group of the workshop are young people from the local community who are not normally involved in the work of the association. When breaking the language barrier, different tools are used, depending on the situation. During one of the stories, which the participant told in her own language, the workshop leader translated excerpts into Croatian simultaneously, who, despite not knowing the language, was practiced at the preparatory meetings. One of the participants decided to tell the story in English, while the other participant decided to tell the story in Croatian. When reciting a poem, they decided not to translate it, but to let the melodiousness of the language and the emotion of the performance speak more than the translation could convey. The workshop leader can decide to bring a certain number of people who simultaneously speak two of the languages that are planned to be used, so that translation is possible. Also, it is possible to assign the basic group of participants the task of translating from each other in such a way that they get to know each other's fairy tale at the preparatory meetings.

WHY IT WORKS

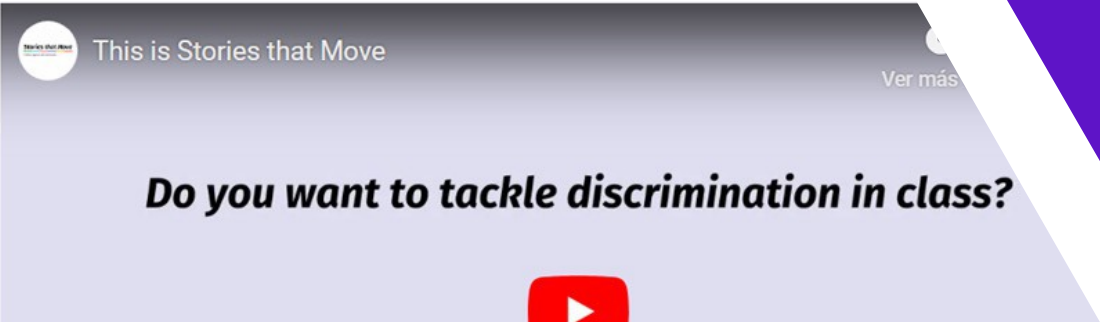
The main issue addressed by the workshop is bringing the universality of human experience closer to those who do not have the opportunity to spend time with people from different cultures. Regardless of the part of the planet from which the person comes, the workshop shows that the possibility of understanding always exists, despite the language barrier.

3.4. Spain

Stories that Move

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED
Engaging digital materials
Anti-discrimination
Multiculturalism

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
University of Barcelona (the international initiative led by the Anne Frank Foundation)



SUMMARY

Stories that Move is a multi-lingual blended learning 'toolbox against discrimination', designed to help students think critically and to be aware of their active role as citizens. It provides engaging digital materials with well-founded pedagogical support for their teachers. The toolbox is built around film clips of young people from across Europe, talking about their own experiences with various forms of discrimination. The project is led by the Anne Frank Foundation with partners in multiple countries including Spain where this initiative is led by the University of Barcelona.

HOW IT WORKS

The platform has two main target groups: Educators (in particular school teachers) across Europe, which can use the platform to teach/explore the topics of discrimination with their students; and Individual learners with focus on young people across Europe. The young people featured in the videos also come from different European countries and present a very diverse college of stories, showcasing identities across religion, appearance, migration status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic background, etc. The online toolbox consists of five learning paths, each exploring a topic to do with discrimination and diversity. In each path there are short film clips in which young people talk about their experiences, both positive and negative, including instances of exclusion and discrimination.

WHY IT WORKS

The platform and all materials are available in 9 languages. The project won the Comenius EduMedia award 2018 for excellent digital teaching materials and has quadrupled the number of signed up educators since its launch. The project analysed the user experience and incorporated new insights about digital learning into the make-over of the online toolbox. The toolkit is improved by new content, it can now be used on smartphone, tablet and laptop and the new design is easier to use for people with visual impairments, in line with the latest web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG). Useful educational guidelines and materials, including videos, tools and worksheets can be used in diverse methodologies by teachers.

LINK: <https://www.ub.edu/gredi/project-24-stories-that-move/?lang=en>

3.4. Spain

Garage Afternoons

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED
Social inclusion of vulnerable youth
Music and urban culture
Job training

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
Garaje Association



SUMMARY

The Garage Afternoons project offers vulnerable young people (with social, mental health and/or behavioural problems) between the ages of 16 and 24 from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, a free, urban, formative and musical space for cultural expression and creation, allowing them to generate, communicate and disseminate valuable messages through music, learning how to use their backgrounds as a tool of social and professional value and imprinting quality on their creative processes.

HOW IT WORKS

The project promotes the social inclusion of vulnerable young through individual and family psychosocial counselling, musical training, cultural dynamization and job training.
By using a creative methodology that exploits the potential of urban music as a social protection factor, preventing and modifying violent behaviour, mental health problems and conflicts in family and community life, among other problems.
By connecting teenagers and young people with professionals in education and art, encouraging the synergies that arise from these meetings to generate educational innovation, popular art and social awareness.

WHY IT WORKS

There are several music and artistic productions which are recorded in the Association and disseminated through different communication channels to improve the self-esteem and self-concept of the participants. 50 young people of Garage Afternoons have already had the opportunity to perform in venues such as cultural centres, foundations, museums, Universities and music festivals. Young people improve their capacities for expression, learning and socialisation, by living together in a place of support and accompaniment to improve their reality.

LINK: [TARDES DE GARAJE \(asociaciongaraje.es\)](https://asociaciongaraje.es)

3.4. Spain

School Inside Cinema

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED
Film school
Vulnerable youth
Training and artistic residency scholarships

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
Cineteca Madrid, Matadero Madrid, 24 posibilidades por segundo, Red de centros del programa ASPA, Fundación Balía, Casa Escuela Santiago Uno and Netflix



SUMMARY

Inside Cinema created the first free, municipal, therapeutic film school for adolescents and young people between the ages of 16 and 23 who are in a situation of particular vulnerability, without employment or training and/or in a situation of family vulnerability. Its aim is twofold: to train students in the language and practice of film, while at the same time providing them with tools for dialogue, self-exploration, expression, empowerment and knowledge.

HOW IT WORKS

During the academic year 2022/2023 the project has two annual groups, one for first-year students, newly promoted with no previous experience, where a collective film is made, and a second group aimed at participants from past editions who continue to experiment in the format of ARTISTIC RESIDENCE, tackling their own film projects.
The film director, the psychotherapist and the filmmaker have created a disruptive and innovative methodology which proposes to take filmmaking out of the academies, film sets and fee-paying schools, to make it available to young people with fewer opportunities.
Participants learn to make films from the first day, with professional means, sharing personal experiences and imagining from the sequences that are filmed by the school's own students.

WHY IT WORKS

School Inside Cinema has trained 200 students and released 4 feature films during the last 5 years. Several students have received training and artistic residency scholarships funded by NETFLIX and have participated in a job placement programme in collaboration with different companies, providing opportunities for these young people who are starting to work in the industry of series for platforms and cinema.

LINK: <https://www.cinetecamadrid.com/ciclo/escuela-dentro-cine>

Lyrical Ceramics

A collection of traditional clay musical instruments, including several tall, hourglass-shaped drums with animal skin heads and various shallow, bowl-like vessels, displayed on a blue surface. A person's hands are visible playing one of the drums.

Kofoeds Skole

A large, colorful collage of various artworks, including abstract patterns, portraits, and illustrations, framed by orange and purple geometric shapes. The collage features a central green square with a stylized face, a pink bottle labeled 'ALCOHOL', a sign reading 'DIPTYKON', and a speech bubble saying 'HELLO! WHO ARE YOU?'. Other elements include a guitar player, a couple kissing, and various abstract and figurative drawings.

3.5. Denmark

Sølund festivalen

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Music and social life for young people with special needs

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

open to all Danish organisations who are working with special needs groups (daycare centres, schools, residential homes etc.)



SUMMARY

Sølund Music Festival is the world's largest festival for people with learning disabilities, located near the village of Sølund. Its purpose is to give people with developmental disabilities throughout Denmark, and the world, the opportunity for cultural and social gatherings together with their companions and/or relatives.

HOW IT WORKS

A three-day long music festival with professional bands and entertainers. Social activities including dancing, singing and dating

WHY IT WORKS

It brings young people together through music, performance and festive activities to have fun and party.

LINK: <https://solundfestivalen.dk/>

3.5. Denmark

TV Glad

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Television project for young people with learning disabilities

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

TV Glad is a part of the Glad Foundation, that one of Denmark's largest socio-economic companies with local branches in Copenhagen, Aarhus, Esbjerg, Aabenraa, Vejlen and Ringsted



SUMMARY

It began in 1999, when TV-Glad went on the air as the world's first TV station for and with the mentally handicapped. Since then, it has expanded with other business areas.

HOW IT WORKS

Freedom of expression also to people with learning disabilities. Inclusion through education and employment

WHY IT WORKS

The overall goal of the project is to create a school environment suitable for promoting inclusive education through art for children at risk of exclusion, with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additionally, the project seeks to share its findings with local communities to encourage more schools to embrace this innovative approach to inclusive education. It raises awareness and creates interest in society for this group of young people.

LINK: <https://www.tv-glad.dk/>

3.5. Denmark

Egmont Højskolen

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Inclusion and diversity in all fields of education and free time activities in a live-in college.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Egmont Højskolen - an independent school with 200 students and 80 staff members.



SUMMARY

The People's College is a traditional education form in Denmark dating back to 1830. At that time Latin schools and universities were only for the wealthy. Farmers, workers etc. did not have equal opportunities to educate themselves. A Danish priest, Grundtvig, changed this by starting a movement called The People College movement.

HOW IT WORKS

The Egmont college was founded in 1956 by Oluf Lauth who was spastically paralyzed and a wheelchair user. His aim was to create a school for people with disabilities.

Today it is an International People's College who created a setup where young people without disabilities are teamed up with young people with disabilities.

WHY IT WORKS

In addition to being students on an equal footing, the students enter a mutually binding relationship, which is very developing for both parties.

LINK: <https://www.egmont-hs.dk/>

3.6. EU level

Theater Newspaper

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Media literacy
Critical thinking
Theatre | Civic education

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

A.R.T. Fusion (Romania), Inter Alia (Greece), Hang-Kép Kulturális Egyesület (Hungary), Creative Connections (Norway), SNRDIMU (Poland), Teatro Metaphora (Portugal)



SUMMARY

The aim of the project is to develop critical media consumption skills among Bucharest residents through Newspaper Theater. This method of non-formal education, originally developed by Augusto Boal in Brazil and adopted internationally, transforms non-dramatic texts (news, statistics, reports, etc.) into theatrical performances. These performances are performed by volunteer actors with the aim of stimulating reflection on social issues and the way they are presented in the media. 150 volunteers got involved in local plays as actors and members' support.

HOW IT WORKS

The main objectives of the project included training 5 facilitators in the Newspaper Theater method and promoting critical media-related skills among a minimum of 300 inhabitants of Bucharest.

The project also created a set of illustrative materials available online, accessible for further use by other interested organizations or groups.

The young people explored examples of oppression and the content media in their lives, improved their motivation, civic competences critical thinking and empowered themselves in exercising their rights democratic rights.

The project included many local partners such as schools, service institutions, social services, youth centers, other members of civil society, the press and local authorities.

A Legislative Theater manual was created and is available as support of interested practitioners of the Newspaper Theater method.

WHY IT WORKS

This initiative is distinguished by its ability to develop critical skills and promote diversity through an innovative and accessible methodology. Its non-formal approach and community involvement contribute to its sustainability and long-term impact on society.

LINKS: artfusion.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Newspaper-Theatre_Manual.pdf

3.6. EU level

Interventions

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED
Inclusion and diversity
Different art forms (theatre, music, photography, juggling and dance)
Breaking stereotypes

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
InterAktion (Austria), Education Studio (Romania), Hellas for Us (Greece), MPPS (North Macedonia), Fundacja 4YOUth (Poland), ProAtlantico (Portugal)



SUMMARY
The “Interventions” youth exchange brought together 36 young people from Austria, Macedonia, Greece, Romania, Poland and Portugal to discover together that we can communicate without using verbal communication. During the youth exchange non-verbal language and art have been used as a tool in breaking stereotypes and supporting the integration process of the refugees in the local community.

HOW IT WORKS
The project aimed to create an inclusive environment where language barriers were eliminated, using art in its various forms as the universal medium of communication. This allowed participants, including refugees, to freely express themselves and fostered a connection between the local community and the newcomers.

The project was divided into three segments: Breaking Stereotypes, Communication Through Art, and Street Performances. The street performances involved brief, interactive interventions within the community, helping to bridge the gap between the participants, refugees, and local residents.

The culmination of the project was a public performance which featured a blend of theatre, juggling, music improvisation, and dance. Additionally, a photo exhibition was held, and traditional sweets from the participants' home countries were shared with the audience.

WHY IT WORKS
This is a simple yet powerful example of using artistic methods to foster inclusion and intercultural communication. The artistic methods can be very diverse, using the available human resources. This method can be used with local groups with fewer opportunities, as well, not only in international settings. It has a very good impact both on the target group, increasing their self-esteem, problem-solving, creativity and communication skills, as well as fostering a sense of belonging to a group, a community and feeling good about themselves when showcasing their performances/art in front of the local community. It also bridges the gap between the local community and the young people with fewer opportunities, in this case, refugees.

LINK: <https://www.verein-interaktion.org/interventions>

3.6. EU level

Circus ACT

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED
Social circus pedagogy
Inclusion of marginalized youth and youth at-risk
Physical literacy | Educational tools for youth workers

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS
[Association for circus, education and culture \(Slovenia\)](#), [Hungarian Juggling Association \(Hungary\)](#), [Stando LTD \(Cyprus\)](#), [The “Hope for Children” CRC Policy Center \(Cyprus\)](#), [Tampere University \(Finland\)](#), [The Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres \(Estonia\)](#), [Bennohaus Münster \(Germany\)](#)



SUMMARY
Social circus is an innovative approach based on the combination of circus arts and social pedagogy which aims to assist personal development and boost the self-esteem and social competence of at-risk youth through circus instruction and performance. The project brings circus to young people to provide a variety of experiences and activities which positively affect their emotional, physical, and mental, as well as self-confidence and the ability to focus.

HOW IT WORKS
The project aims at providing youth at-risk with both tangible circus skills and with the opportunity to perform, thereby increasing social cohesion and self-esteem.

Training events were organized both for youth workers and youth, putting social circus methodologies into practice, as well as piloting social circus workshops.

Educational tools for youth workers were developed to help them acquire theoretical and practical knowledge of social circus pedagogy and support them in planning and implementing social circus learning activities for youth at-risk.

WHY IT WORKS
Just like the road to maturity is full of trial and error, circus requires young people to persist through a series of failures until they inevitably succeed. Social circus enhances their emotional, physical, and mental health, improving their physical literacy, personal development and social growth. Thus, the integration of this unique set of skills learned through developmental circus arts programs is disposed to equip youth with the resilience they need to be successful adults and take up an active role in society.

LINKS: <https://circusact.eu/>

3.6. EU level

Reshape Ceramics: Espacio Rojo's pilot

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

Ceramic workshops
Social inclusion
Employability through craft design

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Espacio Rojo (Spain), Equal Society (Greece), Centro Social de Soutelo (Portugal), Nyitott Kö (Hungary), Utopia (Turkey), Teatr Grodzki (Poland)



SUMMARY

Ceramic workshops as a promotion of social inclusion are an impactful tool to create employability through craft design, creating original products and possibilities for entrepreneurship with a social impact. The young people, from 18 to 29 years old, were migrant (men and women) with low economic resources.

HOW IT WORKS

In each workshop participants make their clay piece during a 2-hours-long session, following the educator's instructions. The final decoration and finishing of the created piece are carried out.

After the ceramic pieces are dried, then they are placed into the ceramic kiln.

Ceramics pieces are removed from the kiln, then it is to bathe it in ceramic glaze, which will remain moved from the kiln, is to bathe it in ceramic glaze, as well as a wide variety of glazes and other materials such as pigments, and ceramic markers can be used. When the piece is decorated, the colours must be fixed by used. When the piece is decorated, the colours must be fixed by placing it once again in a ceramic kiln, which is carried out by an expert professional.

WHY IT WORKS

The young group faces a double vulnerability: migrant and youth group to which they belong, considering that Spain and the youth group to which they belong, have among the highest rates of youth unemployment in Europe. The process of the ceramic's activity serves to empower and improve the lives of vulnerable groups, it manages to connect with society in its utilitarian aspect as well as the historical aspect of humanity. It can be developed in different social contexts. It is ideal for working with mixed groups and stimulates creative development by tensions and/or emotions through the manipulation of clay with their hands.

LINKS: <https://stepupart.eu/>

3.6. EU level

Outside In

MAIN TOPICS ADDRESSED

a platform for artists who encounter significant barriers to the art world due to health, disability, social circumstance, or isolation

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Outside In was formed in 2006 at Pallant House Gallery. Outside In became an independent charity in 2017 and gained National Portfolio Organisation status with the Arts Council England in 2018.



SUMMARY

Outside In provides a digital platform for artists to show their work and three programmes of activity: artist development, exhibitions, and training. Outside In aims to create a fairer art world by supporting artists, creating opportunities, and influencing arts organisations. The charity has developed its regional presence and now has hubs in the South of England, the Midlands and the North West with plans to develop a hub in the South West.

HOW IT WORKS

Step Up training offers those facing barriers to the art world the opportunity to gain new arts-sector skills. These skills include researching, interpretation, devising and delivering creative workshops, writing in response to artwork, curating exhibitions and speaking confidently about art.

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WHY IT WORKS

Outside In works because it engage with the artists on the basis of equality. It has a strong vision and a very high level of integrity. It has the ability to communicate to the audience and to play an important and visible role in the established cultural society of the United Kingdom thereby raising awareness.

LINK: <https://outsidein.org.uk/>

4

Inclusionary

Conclusion

To tackle the topic of social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities through artistic and creative methods, we conducted a desk research, analysed relevant EU policies and framework and selected several good practice examples, conducted a questionnaire survey, five focus groups and two interviews. The questionnaire was answered by 132 participants in five partner countries, while 29 participants were involved in the focus groups and interviews.

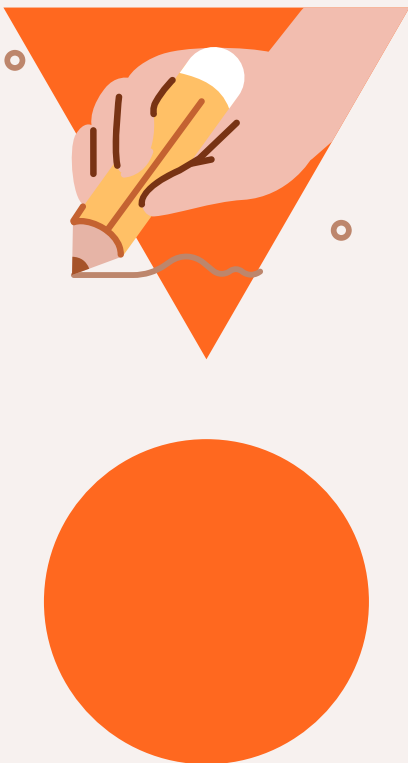
THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. What are the main challenges in fostering inclusion when working with YPWFO in non-formal contexts in Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Romania, and Spain?
- 2. What are the most common strategies and methods used to overcome these challenges in partner countries?
- 3. What are the existing practices to foster inclusion of YPWFO through artistic and creative methods in partner countries and on the EU level?

From unmet basic needs and infrastructural barriers to identity crises and feelings of exclusion in cultural activities, the issues that YPWFO face highlight the need for tailored support. Fostering a sense of belonging, addressing social pressures, and creating inclusive environments are essential steps to empower young people and help them overcome these obstacles.

When youth workers are properly trained and have the needed skills to work with young people from disadvantaged communities, they can better assess their needs and implement proper methods and tools fitting to each group specifically.

As a conclusion of this research, the analysis of challenges regarding the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in non-formal education focuses on the prerequisites for fostering inclusion – needs analysis, outreach, involving the community etc., as well as on the key recommendations for youth workers and other experts. From all the collected data, this report also offers a set of recommendations on how to choose and use artistic/creative methods to foster inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities.



4.1. Key recommendation for youth workers

The most common challenges encountered by youth workers in promoting inclusion when working with YPWFO in non-formal contexts were grouped in eight categories, each with a corresponding (negative) impact and proposed solution to overcome them:

Challenge	Impact	Proposed Solution
Insufficient financial, material, and human resources	Limited ability to run sustainable activities and long-term projects.	Secure financial stability through funding models (e.g., local government, Erasmus+, donations) and using cost-effective materials.
Unsystematic approaches and small initiatives	Activities remain small-scale and fragmented, with limited impact.	Invest in systematic approaches and long-term planning to enhance impact. Work on visibility and public recognition of the work, as well as on advocacy for proactive policies that promote inclusion and offer concrete opportunities.
Lack of support for youth workers	Youth workers feel overwhelmed and unsupported, leading to burnout.	Provide continuous training, educational tools, and resources to support youth workers.
Lack of support from the local community	Limited community engagement and lack of collaboration in inclusion efforts.	Collaborate and network with local institutions, experts, and organizations to build community support.
Difficulty in reaching, involving, and assessing the needs of the target group	Programs may not meet the actual needs of the youth, reducing effectiveness.	Conduct thorough needs assessments and involve youth in the planning process.
Extreme diversity within the group	Difficulty in creating cohesive group dynamics and mutual understanding.	Use customized methods and flexible approaches to accommodate diverse groups.
Challenges with integration into the educational system	Limited access for disadvantaged youth to formal education and development opportunities.	Promote collaboration between formal education systems and non-formal initiatives.
Difficulties in managing and motivating volunteers	Volunteer turnover reduces consistency and sustainability in projects.	Invest in volunteer training, motivation, and engagement to ensure sustainability.

“It’s difficult to use non-formal learning methods with any kind of pupil, no matter the background, but at the same time it is the best way of working with the emotional side of young people, to get in touch with things that they are interested in.” (teacher from Austria)

4.2. How to choose and use an artistic/creative method to foster inclusion?

To be relevant for the inclusion of the target group, an artistic method should fulfil the following important characteristics:

CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Creating a safe space where young people feel comfortable, welcome, and free to express themselves is essential. Building trust and fostering an atmosphere free of judgment enables participants to interact without inhibition, knowing there are no wrong answers, grades, or risks such as deportation. Offering care and support throughout the process is vital, but youth workers should also challenge young people to encourage growth. Open communication and a supportive environment help maintain motivation, while opportunities for free expression and collaborative problem-solving with peers and mentors further empower them. Integrity and equal treatment are fundamental and can be cultivated by approaching young people with respect, avoiding a superior attitude, maintaining consistency, and refraining from making unrealistic promises.

"An artistic non-formal method must create a safe space, where young people are not judged, they can expose themselves, express themselves, manifest and interact with others." (youth worker from Romania)

BE PROCESS-ORIENTED

Being process-oriented means valuing the creative journey and the learning experience itself. Focusing on the process allows young people to understand that there are no grades, no pressures, and no consequences for creating—or not creating—an art piece. It also challenges the notion that artwork must meet certain standards to be deemed acceptable. The process is where the true educational and creative value lies and should not be overshadowed by concerns about the final product. However, the final result is also important as a tangible manifestation of the process and its impact. For example, public presentations or performances serve as significant moments of empowerment and protagonism for young people and their families, highlighting both the process and the outcome as equally valuable.

"Balancing the aim of displaying, exhibiting, performing or selling to an audience with the good artistic process can raise debates between the teachers/trainers/mentors about what is more important - the learning process or the final result." (youth worker from Denmark)

CREATE SPACE FOR EXPLORING

Non-formal learning methods that stimulate creativity are crucial for motivating young people's imagination and encouraging exploration. Providing freedom of expression through a variety of artistic options allows them to explore different aspects of the creative process and discover what resonates with them or where they feel most comfortable. It is also essential to offer participation opportunities regardless of skill level, as many young people may not know their strengths and may be hesitant to try. This approach serves as a starting point to capture their attention, spark their interest, and encourage them to engage in activities.

"No matter what method it is important that the mentor takes the students seriously, to find out what their aims and ambitions are and to guide them from this basis". (a youth worker from Denmark)

CULTIVATE GROUP COHESION

Methods should focus on fostering a sense of community and belonging through activities that connect participants and encourage interaction. Bringing different groups together can break down barriers and create positive experiences for all involved. By facilitating open communication and mutual sharing, the group can amplify positive feelings and build meaningful connections. Mentors play a key role in helping participants relax and open up by promoting acceptance, tolerance, and healthy group dynamics. Through collaborative group activities, young people can cultivate a sense of belonging, challenge prejudices, broaden their perspectives, and boost their self-esteem.

"Be open to group dynamics, sometimes it is not working very well, but sometimes it works miracles." (youth worker from Denmark)

FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Prioritizing the individual and their needs is essential, ensuring that group activities are balanced with personalized support. In cultural projects with YPWFO, the collaborative and empowering work process plays a central role. Empathy, sensitivity, and care are key to this approach. Mentors should foster understanding and create a comfortable environment, treating young people without labels and recognizing their unique potential and talents. This creates a space where young people can thrive and develop with the support they need.

"Regardless of the method we use, it is crucial to prioritize the individual in the planning process." (youth worker from Romania)



ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY

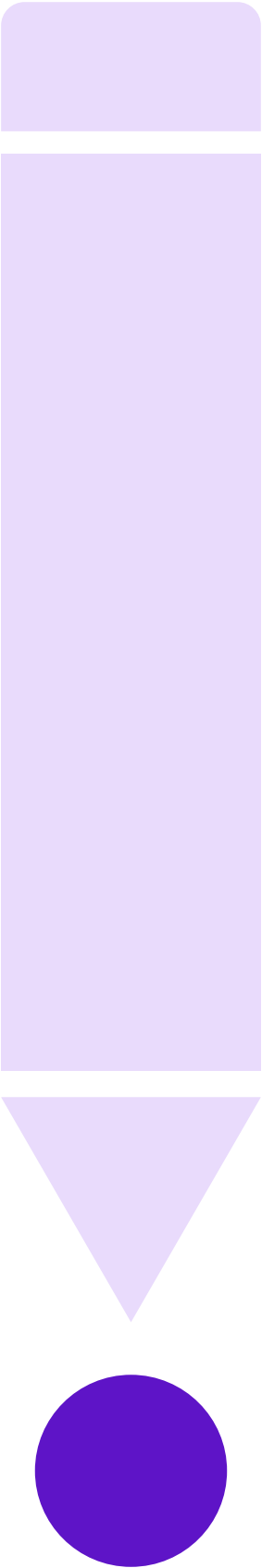
Ensuring that activities are accessible—financially, practically, and physically—and relevant to young people’s interests is crucial for their participation. Youth workers should work alongside them as a team, actively communicating, listening, and validating their interests while bringing art and culture in an accessible way. However, being consistently available to young people requires ongoing self-care from the youth workers to maintain the energy and presence needed for effective support. This balance ensures that both the young people and the youth workers can engage meaningfully in the process.

“Activities have not only to be free for people who otherwise would not be able to enjoy them, but also because of the right of cultural participation, which is a constitutional right in our country, the rights of access and participation in culture are constitutional.” (youth worker from Spain)

BE FLEXIBLE, PRACTICAL AND FUN

The method should be adaptable to various needs and situations, ensuring it is practical, easy to use, accessible, and not overly technical or costly. Incorporating games, board games, and other forms of gamification can create a sense of safety while fostering interaction and understanding among participants, making the approach more engaging and enjoyable. To motivate and engage young people, it’s crucial to adopt a youth-friendly and welcoming communication style, ensuring they feel invited and excited to participate in the activities.

“No matter what method, it is important that the mentor takes the students seriously, to find out what their aims and ambitions are and to guide them from this basis”. (youth worker from Denmark)



DRAW ON THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF ARTS AND CREATIVITY

Drawing on the transformative power of arts and creativity offers a valuable opportunity to reflect on relevant social issues and empower youth. Using creativity in non-formal education allows young people to enrich their lives, develop critical thinking, tackle complex problems, and take proactive stances. Topics can address societal issues such as gender inequality, consumerism, or sustainable development, but also personal challenges and life stories, such as peer violence or migration experiences. The artistic process provides a platform for exploring talents while also developing essential social and problem-solving skills. To ensure inclusivity, cultural content should be adapted so that specific groups can engage not just as audience members but as creators and authors. Their work can have a transformative impact on their lives and serve as an inspiration to others when showcased in exhibitions and public performances.

“Art is the way we communicate and use to create a better world.” (youth worker from Austria)

Checklist for the artistic methods

No. Crt	Criteria	Check	Observation
1	Create a Safe Space	• Ensure participants feel safe, comfortable, and welcome.	
		• Build trust and an atmosphere free from judgment.	
		• Emphasize that there are no wrong answers, grades, or risks.	
		• Provide support while challenging participants to help them grow.	
2	Be Process-Oriented	• Focus on the creative journey and learning experience.	
		• De-emphasize the need for perfect outcomes or norms for artwork.	
		• Value the educational and creative aspects of the process.	
		• Recognize the importance of both the process and the final result.	
3	Create Space for Exploring	• Stimulate imagination and curiosity through creative methods.	
		• Allow participants to try various activities and find what they enjoy.	
		• Ensure inclusivity, regardless of participants’ skills or prior experience.	
		• Take participants’ ambitions seriously and guide them accordingly.	
4	Cultivate Group Cohesion	• Promote a sense of community and belonging through group activities.	
		• Encourage interaction between diverse groups to break down barriers.	
		• Facilitate acceptance, tolerance, and positive group dynamics.	
		• Help participants relax and connect with others.	
5	Focus on the Individual	• Balance group activities with individual support.	
		• Prioritize participants’ personal needs, potential, and talents.	
		• Foster empathy, sensitivity, and care in the learning process.	
		• Avoid labels and recognize each participant’s unique value.	
6	Be Accessible	• Ensure activities are financially, physically, and practically accessible.	
		• Make the activities relevant to young people’s interests.	

Literature

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Appendix 1) The questionnaire

Dear youth workers,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our survey!

The survey is conducted as part of the project Inclusionary – Art for Social Inclusion. Your input will help us map and describe the existing methods and practices in fostering social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities (YPWFO), with a focus on creative and artistic methods, as well as the common challenges youth workers, trainers/facilitators, educators, and other experts face in their work with young people with fewer opportunities.

The questionnaire consists of 22 questions (20 close-ended and 2 open-ended questions) and takes about 15 minutes to complete.

We are interested in your experiences and viewpoints, so please feel free to share them openly. Your input will be used for research purposes and reporting only and will remain confidential.

If you want us to contact you about other research and/or project activities (focus group, training activities...), you can share your email at the end of the questionnaire. Your answers will remain anonymous, as the data will be processed at a group level and responses will not be linked to individual entries.

The results of the questionnaire will be used to develop adaptable tools (a toolbox and an online course) with a focus on artistic and creative methods for youth workers to use in their work with youth from rural areas, youth with disabilities and youth with a migrant/refugee background.

Find out more about the project [here](#).

The project consortium consists of A4ACTION (Romania), InterAktion (Austria), Gaia Museum (Denmark), ESPACIO ROJO (Spain), and Association Delta (Croatia).

If you want to know more about the project or our organisations, feel free to reach us here: iuliana.pavel@a4action.ro

Thank you for your time :)

The project no. 2023-2-RO01-KA220-YOU-000180609 “Inclusionary - Art for Social Inclusion” is co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ programme.

All personal data gathered through this questionnaire is collected during the implementation of the Erasmus + Program according to the regulations of the European Commission. They will be stored and processed by Delta Association in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2018 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data.

1. Which groups do you usually work with? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Elementary school children
- High school youth
- University students
- Young people with learning disabilities
- Young people with mental disabilities
- Young people with physical disabilities
- Young people from rural areas
- Young people with a migrant/refugee background
- Young people in general
- Other: _____

2. How do you and/or your organisation reach your target group? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Through our services, activities, and events
- Through our cooperation with schools and other educational institutions
- Through social service institutions
- They reach out to us
- I don't know
- Other: _____

3. How do you assess the needs and interests of your target group? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Through surveys
- Through observations
- Through policy and relevant document analysis
- Through communication with your target group
- Through stakeholder consultations (e.g. with policy-makers, service providers...)
- Other: _____

4. How do you stay up to date with the latest developments in your field?

Choose up to three options.

- Formal and non-formal educational programs
- Workshops, trainings, and seminars
- Online courses
- Literature reading
- Job shadowing
- I'm not able to stay up to date
- Other: _____

5. What skills do you want to improve in your professional development related to working with YPWFO (young people with fewer opportunities)? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Empathy
- Active listening
- Empowerment skills (the abilities to assign tasks and responsibilities to others, and to give them the support and feedback they need to perform well)
- Artistic/creative skills
- Transparency and sincerity
- Prioritising inclusion
- Conflict resolution
- (Inter)cultural competence
- Other: _____

6. What art fields do you use in your work with youth? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Visual arts (drawing, painting, sculpture, comics, photography, video etc.)
- Music – singing and/or playing an instrument
- Theatre, dance, and movement
- Literature (reading, writing)
- I don't use artistic/creative methods in my work with youth
- Other: _____

7. Describe at least one artistic method you use in your work with youth? (If you already use some artistic methods)

8. What art fields would you like to use in your future work with youth to foster inclusion? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Visual arts (drawing, painting, sculpture, comics, photography, video etc.)
- Music – singing and/or playing an instrument
- Theatre, dance, and movement
- Literature (reading, writing)
- I'm not sure
- Other: _____

9. What do you think are the most important outcomes that such methods should aim to achieve for your target group? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Raise self-confidence and gain a positive self-image
- Develop self-expression
- Develop patience toward the artistic process
- Foster visibility among the local community
- Produce quality artworks/performances
- Gain artistic skills for professional development
- Build a feeling of belonging to a group
- Other: _____

10. What do you think are the important characteristics that make an artistic method useful and relevant to foster inclusion of YPWFO?

Using the scale below, indicate how important you find the following statements:

1 – not at all important 2- slightly important 3 – important 4 – fairly important 5 – very important

1. It's transferable to different social contexts.
2. It's simple.
3. It encourages young people to explore new skills and ideas through art.
4. It's focused on individual expression, rather than the produced artwork.
5. It's accessible to anyone.
6. It enables YPWFO to develop their skills on a professional level.
7. It is visible to the local community.
8. It's innovative and out-of-the box.
9. It's fun and youth friendly.
10. It's cheap (doesn't require expensive equipment).
11. It engages young people in collective creation.
12. It doesn't require high professionalism from the youth worker.

11. What are the greatest challenges that you think YPWFO in your community face in their everyday life?

Choose up to three options.

- Lack of free-time activities (both educational and fun)
- Social exclusion and marginalisation
- Prejudice, discrimination and intolerant behaviour in their communities
- Cultural obstacles such as language and religion
- Physical obstacles in infrastructure
- Lack of content adapted to their specific needs
- Lack of community centers where they could spend time with peers and youth workers
- I don't know
- Other: _____

12. What are the main challenges you face in fostering inclusion of YPWFO in non-formal contexts? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Reaching my target group
- Making the needs assessment of my target group
- Insufficient financial resources
- Lack of skilled professionals able to work with YPWFO
- Lack of support from the local community
- I don't face any significant challenges
- Other: _____

13. What are the main challenges you face in fostering inclusion of YPWFO using art? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- My own lack of artistic skills
- Disinterest and motivation of the target group
- Insufficient financial resources
- Lack of community centres
- I don't face any significant challenges
- I don't use artistic/creative methods in my work with youth
- Other: _____

14. How do you overcome these challenges in your work?

15. What would help you in overcoming these challenges? (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- More free educational courses and trainings on this topic
- Connecting and networking with other youth workers that successfully apply artistic methods with YPWFO
- More spaces that are accessible to youth with disabilities
- Enough financial resources
- Proactive policies on a local level (the county, city, village)
- Other: _____

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Age (FILL IN)

2. Country:

- Austria
- Croatia
- Denmark
- Romania
- Spain
- Other: _____

3. What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- _____
- I prefer not to answer

4. What is the highest degree of education you have completed?

(If currently enrolled, highest degree received)

- Elementary school
- High school
- Trade/technical/vocational training
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree
- Other: _____

5. Your current status

- Unemployed
- Student
- Unable to work
- Full-time employee
- Part-time employee
- Self-employed
- Retired

6. When it comes to your work with young people with fewer opportunities, which type of organisation are you associated with (e.g. as a full-time employee, volunteer, etc.):

- Civil society organization
- Cultural institution
- School
- University
- Social institution
- Non-formal group
- Other: _____

7. Your position or role within the organization (MULTIPLE ANSWER)

- Youth worker
- Trainer/facilitator
- Manager
- Coordinator
- Educator
- Social worker
- Other: _____

Thank you once again for taking part in our research! If you have any questions, feel free to reach us. If you're interested in the next project activities, please leave us your **e-mail address** so we can inform you about ways you can participate. _____



General information and useful tips

LOCATION (for physical events)

It is best to hold focus groups in a comfortable and neutral space, and to provide refreshments (this is a comfort consideration but can also motivate someone to attend). Ensure that there is water available for participants, and if you are providing catering (even if it's just tea/coffee and biscuits), make sure this is in place before you begin so it does not disrupt the process.

Consider that your participants will be more motivated to attend if the focus group is held in a convenient location and at a reasonable time.

Make sure to ask your participants for any adjustments you need to set up before the focus group. Ensure that they have the access they need (e.g. book a space accessible to people who use wheelchairs if your participants need it).

The rooms should have appropriate lighting and ventilation. The environment should not be too noisy or distracting. The layout and furniture can affect the mood and manner of the group so make sure you minimise any external distractions (visual and auditory!). Take this into account before setting the date and time and inviting participants. There are no hard and fast rules about room layouts, but you should ensure that people are comfortable and that there is enough space so that they do not feel 'hemmed in' or stressed.

ONLINE

For online focus groups, you should use an appropriate program that meets the security requirements (personal data protection). Ideally, the program would also provide the option of recording (e.g. Zoom). If you decide not to record the meeting, make sure you include a colleague or a volunteer who will help you take notes so that you can analyse the results appropriately. Make sure that you and the participants have a stable Internet connection.

Take a minute at the beginning to also explain the communication options of the program (how to turn on/off the microphone, how to use the chat and the hand-raising button if there's any.)

The participants must fill the application form for attending online meetings, along with the consent form.

Don't forget to make a print screen of the „gallery“ as a form of proof that the focus group has been held.

DURATION

The focus group should last for about 90 minutes, with an option to prolong the meeting up to 30 minutes if needed.

Make sure to communicate the exact duration in advance so that the participants can plan to be present until the end.

MATERIALS

Digital recorders (at least two) with new batteries and a spare set, or a mobile phone with full battery/a charger, in case you will be recording sound. The attendance list and consent forms. Any other background information that might be needed or handouts.

It's advised to have name badges.

Writing materials, flip-charts, white-board pens, sticky notes (post-it), and any other resources that might be needed.

RECORDING

You can record the sound (with a dictaphone or mobile phone), or just take notes of the conversation. You can also combine the two, so if you don't catch up all the details in the notes, you can use the recording afterwards for a better analysis.

One person should take care that the recording is in process.

The facilitator should indicate the beginning of the recording and show the recording device.

If you record, it's not mandatory to make the whole transcription afterwards (which is time-consuming), but you need to extract the most important parts and the main conclusions

FACILITATION

When focus groups work well, they can produce new understandings. However, there is obviously a risk that the group dynamics will intimidate some participants, which is why the role of facilitation is extremely important. The focus group facilitation should help to ensure that the discussions are productive and beneficial to all participants (if certain people dominate, as the facilitator it's part of your role to draw out the more silent participants and manage any attempts to dominate the conversation).

The best method for asking questions is to make sure they are as open as possible. Questions do not need to be asked in the proposed order. The flow and the quality of the conversation might influence your choice of questions and timing.

The facilitator should avoid influencing the group's thoughts on the subject.

A good approach is for the facilitator to use a strategy of 'structured eavesdropping'; the more participant-led the discussion, the better. However, the facilitator also needs to ensure that the structure of the focus group is followed and all questions are covered in a reasonable time frame.

There are times when the facilitator might need to take a more interventionist approach (if the discussion gets heated or dries up, for example). The facilitator can try to get the group to discuss inconsistencies between participants and within their own thinking. Disagreements can lead to clarifications and new understandings if handled properly; misunderstandings can often be resolved by the participants themselves. Reflection and seeking clarification are useful as they can encourage deeper thinking on key issues. Just be sure not to lead the group thinking or suggest answers.

It is important that you have a clearly defined research question and sufficient evidence-based data (either from other research or literature) to be able to identify the key themes for discussion.

Guide rather than rigidly structure the focus group; it is best to take an organic approach, encouraging conversation amongst participants and guiding them by using the provided questions or reflections as a prompt.

Protocol frame

START Suggested time: 5 minutes	A focus group discussion will always start with an introduction from the facilitator about its purpose and process. ♣ Welcome all the participants and introduce yourself and any other team members in the room/online, explaining their roles. ♣ Express gratitude for the participants' presence and emphasize the importance of their roll in this research/project. ♣ Explain the general purpose of the discussion and why the participants were chosen. Shortly present the Inclusionary project. ♣ Explain the presence and purpose of the audio recording equipment. ♣ Explain the structure of the focus group, the duration and outline any ground rules and discussion guidelines. These might include the importance of hearing everyone, speaking one at a time and that the moderator might interrupt to assure that all the topics can be fairly covered. ♣ Review any housekeeping information or online technicalities. ♣ Remind the participants to fill the attendance list (if the group is held physically) and consent forms. ♣ Ensure that the group understands what will happen to the information – that it will be analysed in a report. Make it clear that no individual will be identified in any output from the research and that whilst what is said might be quoted it will be done in a way to ensure that it is anonymous.
GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER Suggested time: 15 minutes	♣ Engage the group by starting with a warm-up round, which can include a short introduction round to ensure participants are familiar with who else is in their group. ♣ You can point out the group diversity, and/or one mutual thing that connects all the participants. ♣ You can add to the round the task ‘suggest something that you consider to be important in this topic’. This approach helps engage the group and gives the facilitators some ideas on the direction the discussion could take. ♣ Ice-breakers can be useful at the start as they allow people to get a feel for the group before the discussion starts - you can find examples of different ice-breakers online (for example: https://www.signupgenius.com/groups/group-icebreakers.cfm).
DISCUSSION Suggested time: 60 minutes	♣ The facilitator reminds the group that there are no right-or-wrong answers and that everyone's opinions are important. The participants can begin to talk without being called out (the hand-raising button and chat can be used in the online version), but the group members also need to give room for everyone to express themselves by being conscious of each other. ♣ It is important to engage each and every participant at the beginning (at the 1 st question) as it can direct the rest of the conversation. ♣ At each main question, you can add questions for further explanation (<i>Can you explain/elaborate on that?, Could you tell us more about that?</i>), and also use paraphrasing*, reflections and naming emotions.*expressing, in our own words, the meaning we got from what someone said ♣ It's important to notice the body language too, and comment if needed (e.g. <i>I see you are all nodding, so I suppose you all agree.</i>). In the online version, if



Questions for the focus group

Questions for the focus group

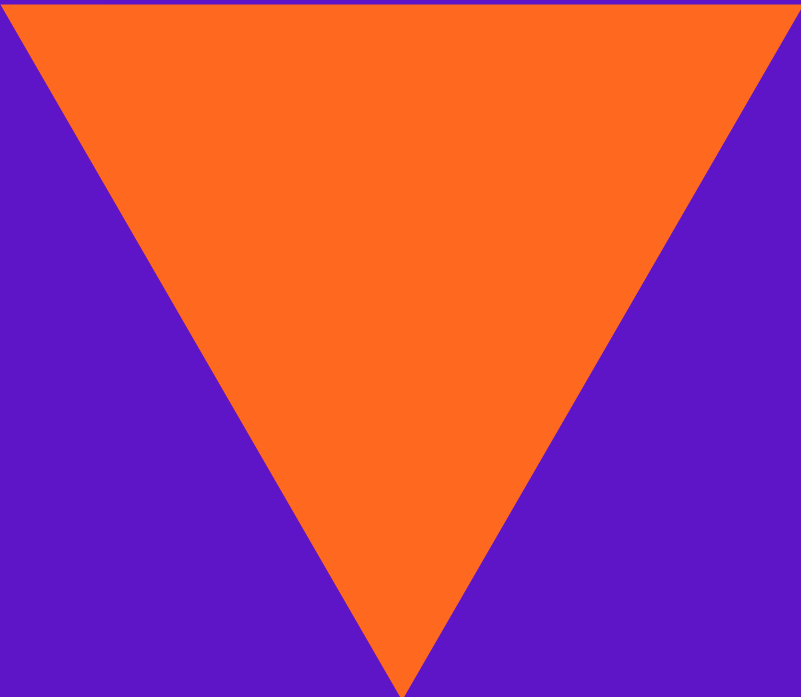
- 1. What is the usual target audience that you work with? (e.g. age-range, type of disability, coming from rural areas, people with refugee background etc.)
 - What are the biggest challenges that you think YPWFO you work with face in their everyday life? What are the biggest challenges regarding inclusion?
- 2. What are your main challenges in fostering inclusion when working with YPWFO in non-formal contexts?
 - What strategies and methods do you use to overcome these challenges?
 - What would help you in overcoming these challenges?
- 3. Do you use artistic/creative methods to foster inclusion of your target group? Describe them. How do they benefit the young people you work with – in terms of their personal development and inclusion?
 - How do you evaluate the successfulness of these methods in fostering inclusion (how do you know a specific method has fostered inclusion?)
 - How do you evaluate whether or not the method helped develop useful skills or improved self-esteem of your target group?
 - What do you think are the important characteristics that an artistic method needs to fulfil to be relevant for the inclusion of your target group? For instance, do you think it's important they develop group cohesion or have a more individual approach; is it more important to produce an artwork of quality or be more process-oriented?

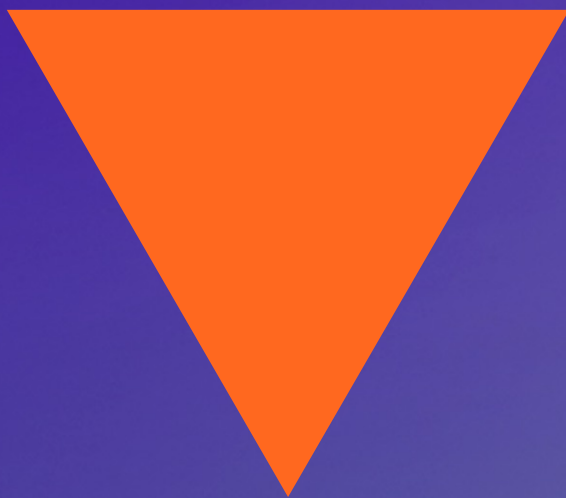
BONUS QUESTION:

- Can you name some of the main principles you value in your work with YPWFO?

The literature used:

Focus Group Protocol Guide, futuredigital&democratise, 2013





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