PROJECT: "Establishment of a transnational network of adult education providers for the promotion of social inclusion of vulnerable groups" – STEP UP
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# MANUAL

## DESIGNING AND DELIVERING ARTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES TO VULNERABLE GROUPS

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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Step Up

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# ABOUT THIS MANUAL:

This manual is elaborated under the scope of the project **"Establishment of a transnational network of adult education providers for the promotion of social inclusion of vulnerable groups/ STEP UP"** (https://www.stepupart.eu/index.php) to provide guidelines and tips on how to design and implement arts and cultural activities targeting specific vulnerable groups and in particular:

- Persons with visual impairments, including blind persons
- Persons with mental health problems
- Persons with intellectual disabilities
- Homeless people
- Women, including migrant
- Persons with low income, including young people
- Seniors

In particular, the manual aims to provide practical information and guidelines based on the partners' experiences from the implementation of specific arts and cultural activities with the participation of the above-mentioned vulnerable groups, which are summarised in the following:

- Methodology on how to design arts and cultural activities that meet the needs of the target groups,
- Ways of approaching the target groups and maintaining their interest in participating in the cultural activities,
- Developing training programmes for the target groups,
- Ways to evaluate these training programmes.
- How to provide training to members of these vulnerable groups who wish to become trainers themselves.

Trainers and facilitators must adopt different approaches for these vulnerable groups based on their needs. Therefore, the manual references concrete guidelines for involving each target group in cultural and artistic activities.

Overall, the manual aims to reach out to adult educators, social workers, volunteers, and researchers who work or consider working with the above-mentioned vulnerable groups and targets to empower and support them in developing and implementing relevant arts and cultural activities with high quality and impact.

# BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT STEP UP

Step Up project is co-funded by the European Union Erasmus+ programme. The general objective is to establish a new transnational network of adult education providers of informal and non-formal educational activities who are mainly working on promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable adult learners.

The project's specific objective is to foster European cooperation between adult education providers working with specific adult education learner groups and particularly vulnerable groups.

The Network facilitates the cooperation and exchange of experiences among the participating organisations. It promotes the role of culture and arts, in the context of adult education, in reducing the social inclusion process of vulnerable groups.

The project is being implemented by:

- Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Teatr Grodzki, Poland
- Centro Social de Soutelo, Portugal
- Equal Society, Greece
- Espacio Rojo, Spain
- Nyitott Kör Egyesület, Hungary
- Oba Ütopya Eğitim Sanat Ve Medya Ticaret Limited Şirketi (aka. Utopia Education and Art), Türkiye

# SECTION 1

## Adult Education and Vulnerable Groups

# SECTION 1

## Adult Education and Vulnerable Groups

### 1.1 Adult Education as a Life-long Learning Approach

Defining adult education depends on where one is standing. There are many examples of how people experience it: sports or well-being classes several mornings a week at a community centre, continuing education programs for the employees, art and language classes held by municipalities for the locals, and private or project-funded self-development courses for building up social skills and training courses for developing new professional skills. These are just a few examples of how the field of adult education encompasses many components. In addition to this, working with adults generally requires developing some organised and educational activity.

Moreover, adult education differs from adult learning. A person trying to overcome an illness may learn a lot through reading books and articles, doing online research, and listening to others dealing with the same disease. It is a process in which adult learning happens with real-life experience. On the other hand, if the same person participates in a patient-education program or a self-help group focusing on the illness, this process would be called adult education. The difference is that those programs are systematic, organised events intended to bring about learning. So while learning can occur incidentally and in planned educational activities, **only the planned activities are called adult education.** Merriam and Brockett define adult education as "activities intentionally designed to bring about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults". (2007: 8)[1]

With so many adults interested in engaging with learning environments that encompass everything from basic literacy to personal fulfilment, the term "adult education" has also been used for lifelong learning beyond traditional schooling. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) notes that adult education is **"the entire body of organised educational processes; whatever the content, level or method, whether formal or otherwise".**

[1]Merriam, Sharan B.& Brockett, Ralph G.(2007). The Profession and Practice of Adult Education: An Introduction. Jossey-Bass, 2007, p. 3-8.

**Within these processes, adults "improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge". [2]**

Adult education, in particular, reflects a learning and teaching approach that assumes adults can and are willing to learn. Adults would choose the subject they would like to learn and how to learn it according to their needs and be responsible for the continuity of the process. Besides personal needs and interests, **adult learning is affected by demographics, globalisation and technology in the current sociocultural context.[3]** Without a doubt, there are many ways and contexts that an individual is learning, as stated in previous paragraphs, and currently, there are three classifications for the types of education:

**Formal education is** primary academic education in an institution with a structured and planned curriculum. The learning process is typically evaluated, graded and proved with certification.

**Non-formal education** consists of organised and structured learning opportunities designed for a target group to achieve a set of learning objectives. Learning might take place anywhere suitable for the process, inside or outside the classroom, in community centres, museums, art spaces, and outdoors. In general, **non-formal education focuses on learners, is open and flexible to learners' needs and interests, and is adaptable to the changing needs of individuals and societies.[4]**

**Informal education** means continuously learning outside the institutionalised settings in daily life, where learners and educators engage in everyday problems and basic needs and create new learning. Informal education is **based on observation, discovery, trial and mistakes are considered highly important for learning, it happens in all settings (within families, friends or work environment), and there are no classes, attendance or grades.[5]**

[2] International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997). Available at: https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/filt=all/id=41 08.08.2022.

[3] Baumgartner, Sharan B. Merriam, Rosemary S. Cafarella, Lisa M.(2007). Learning in adulthood : a comprehensive guide (3rd ed.). SanFrancisco: Jossey-Bass. p. 7.

[4] Grajcevci, Albulene & Shala, Arif. (2016). Formal and Non-Formal Education in the New Era, Action Researcher in Education, issue 7, p. 120.

[5] Cross, J. (2007). Informal learning: Rediscovering the natural pathways that inspire Innovation and Performance. San Francisco: Pfeiffer, p. 16-17.

Photo by Teatr Grodzki

According to **The World Bank's 2019 World Development Report** on **The Changing Nature of Work**, adaptability, critical thinking, problem-solving, curiosity, and creativity are cognitive and socio-behavioural skills highly valued by the labour market.

In this case, adult education programs are essential to help older employees to develop and update their skills and improve adaptability for the future of their professional life.[6]

As a result of technological developments and social transformations, **lifelong education has become compulsory and yet reachable for everyone.** For the future of nations and countries, the education of adults is as important as the education of children and young people. Thus, education cannot be limited to the school environment or only learning in childhood and adolescence. Moreover, accumulated knowledge, life and work experience make a big difference, and most adults are generally self-motivated to learn. Life experience and information needs provide a foundation for learning. Therefore, adult education is distinguished from traditional and institutionalised education and is referred to as **'andragogy'**. Educator Eduard C. Lindeman, known for his pioneering contributions to adult education, believed that education should be in harmony with life, should consist of non-academic and non-vocational ideas, focus on real life and value learners' needs, interests and experiences. As Lindeman stated, "education is life—not merely preparation for a strange kind of future living… **the whole of life is learning, therefore education can have no endings.** This new venture is called adult education not because it is confined to adults but because adulthood, maturity, defines its limits".[7]

[6] World Bank World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work. p. 72-82, available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/816281518818814423/pdf/2019-WDR-Report.pdf / 10.08.2022.

[7] Lindeman, Eduard (1926). The Meaning of Adult Education, New York: New Republic, p.4-5.

## 1.2 Experiential Learning in Adult Education

Experiential learning is a participatory process in which individuals **"learn by doing"** and reflect on experiences. Experiential learning activities can include hands-on experiments, internships, practicums, field trips, study abroad, research, short or long-term projects, exchange programmes and more. Experiential learning programs that are well-planned, monitored and evaluated **promote interdisciplinary learning, social engagement, professional development, cultural awareness, leadership skills, and other professional and intellectual skills.**[8]

**David Kolb** published his experiential learning model in 1984, and his theory works on two levels: **a four-stage cycle of learning and four different learning styles.** Kolb's theory mainly relates to the **learner's internal cognitive processes, and new experiences develop new concepts.** Effective learning occurs through the following **cycle of four stages:** (1) having a **concrete experience** followed by (2) **observation** of and **reflection** on that experience which leads to (3) the formation of **abstract concepts** (analysis) and **generalisations** (conclusions) which are then (4) **actively experimented** in future situations, resulting in new experiences.

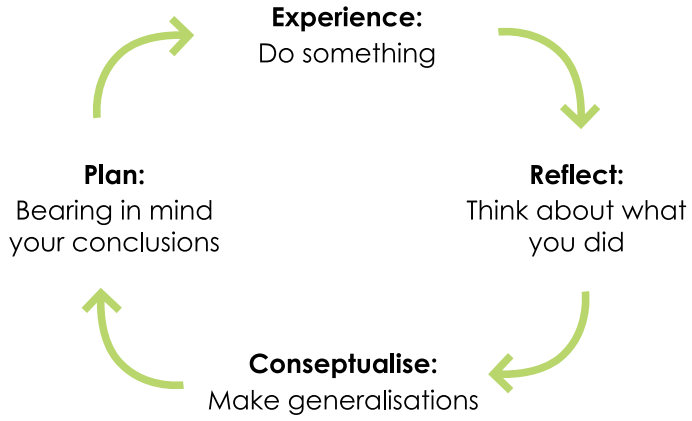



**Diagram 1: Kolb's Learning Cycle**
source: based on Kolb, A. David (2015). Experiential Learning, p.1-5.

Kolb explains that different people naturally learn with different styles. Various factors influence a person's learning style, such as; social environment, educational experiences, or the basic cognitive structure of the individual.

[8] Kolb, A. David (2015). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development [2 ed.], New Jersey: Pearson FT Press, p. 1-5.

**How we approach a task, our emotional response, or how we think or feel is unique.** Some people prefer active experimenting – just doing; some prefer reflective observation – just watching. We start thinking about how to react when we face a new experience, and our learning style is a product of these choices.[9]

To help adults in the learning process, an educator has a role of a facilitator, who should **ensure that the content is designed and implemented in ways that offer each learner the chance to engage with their learning styles.** Facilitating the learning process requires supporting learners, providing appropriate resources and physical safety. Recognising and encouraging spontaneous opportunities for learning, engagement with challenging situations and discovering solutions help the learner to make meaningful connections and genuinely enjoy the learning process.[10]

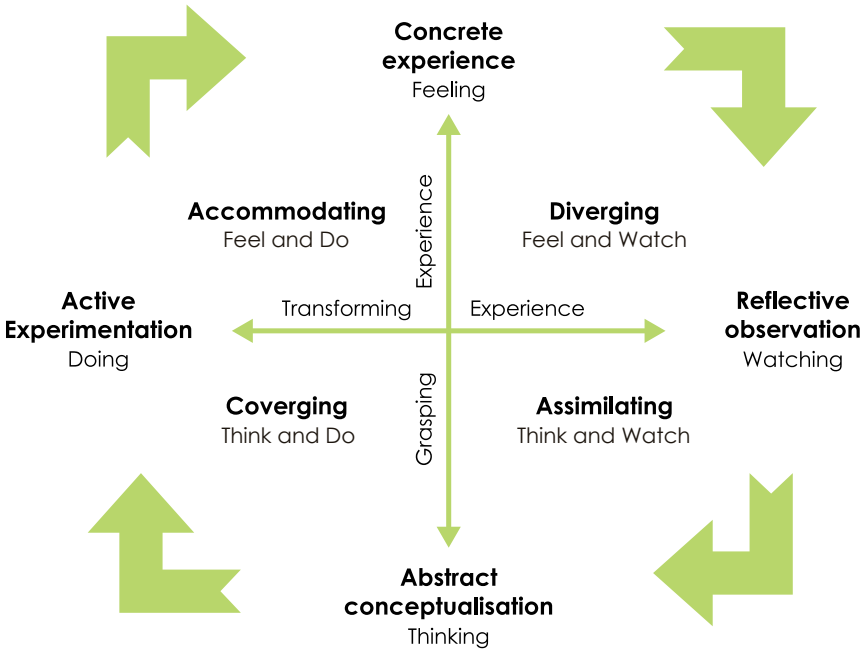



**Diagram 2**
source: based on Kurt, Serhat (2020) 'Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and Learning Styles', available at: https://educationaltechnology.net/kolbs-experiential-learning-theory-learning-styles/ 16.09.2022.

[9] McLeod, S. A. (2017, Oct 24). Kolb - learning styles, available at: https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html / 15.08.2022.

[10] https://www.bu.edu/ctl/guides/experiential-learning/ / 15.08.2022.

## 1.3 An Inclusive Approach to Adult Education

Participation in adult learning has many benefits, including wage gains, health benefits, civic participation, social value and improved family life chances.[11] While this applies to all adults, there are dramatic changes among vulnerable groups. The concept of vulnerability in adulthood is likely to have different contexts and perspectives in other societies.

Within the scope of the project Step Up, **a vulnerable adult is a person who is 18 or over and is facing possible disadvantages due to various factors, such as age, gender, ability, citizenship, ethnicity, health status, income, religion or beliefs and sexual orientation.** Depending on how we define the concept, every adult has the potential to be vulnerable. [12]

Regarding adult education, **"inclusive education"** is essential. Although learners may have challenges, they should be able to participate in programs that would be beneficial, effective and practical in their lives. The success of inclusive education is primarily achieved by accepting, understanding, and adapting to the differences and diversity of learners, including their physical, cognitive, academic, social and emotional dimensions. It's also critical that all students feel welcomed, appropriately challenged and supported.[13]

**The World Summit for Social Development** held in Copenhagen in 1995 defined an inclusive society as a **"society for all"** where all individuals, all with rights and responsibilities, are empowered to participate actively. (United Nations, 1995, para 66). Inclusive societies have mechanisms that consider diversity and facilitate people's active participation in political, economic and social life. These societies provide equal opportunities for everyone to overcome differences in race, gender, class, generation and region. Also, they enable everyone to reach their full potential in life. Social inclusion ensures that a society simultaneously promotes individual well-being, mutual trust, belonging and connection.[14]

[11] https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2013/dec/12/councils-adult-education-learning-communities / 15.08.2022

[12] Wave: Working With Adults Who Are Vulnerable – A Comparison Of Curricula, Policies And Constructions - Final Report, p.3-6, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237048447 /15.08.2022.

[13] Dale McManis, Lilla. https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/inclusive-education /15.08.2022.

[14] https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html

Photo by Espacio Rojo

The World Bank has defined the concept of social inclusion as **"the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society". In the report "Inclusion matters: The foundation for shared prosperity"**, The World Bank notices that "social inclusion is about human well-being, shared prosperity, and social justice". Promoting social inclusion aims to achieve inclusion in three related areas; markets, services, and spaces.[15]

The pledge to **leave no one behind** is among the defining features of **UNESCO's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The impact of climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, driving inequalities even further. The 2030 Agenda envisages peaceful, just and inclusive societies where all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality. The fight against inequality links with the ambitions to eliminate poverty, preserve the planet and achieve sustained economic growth.

Building inclusive societies have been a longstanding international community commitment and a significant component of a new humanism approach. **An inclusive society** is a society for all in which every individual has an active role. Such a society is based on fundamental values of **equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms**, and the principles of t**olerance and embracing diversity**. An inclusive society needs appropriate mechanisms that enable all its citizens to participate in decision-making that affect their lives and ultimately shapes their shared future.[16]

Within a socially cohesive society, all groups would have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy. Diversity is highly accepted even if these societies might not be demographically homogeneous, and social **cohesion ensures vulnerable groups take active roles in society.**

Given the beneficial outcomes of adult education, designing and delivering arts and cultural activities to vulnerable individuals has the potential to bring people together, creating an inclusive and creative atmosphere where all values and principles are respected; and empowering the participants.

[15] World Bank (2013), Inclusion matters: The foundation for shared prosperity, New Frontiers of Social Policy, p. 51-53, available at: http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/114561468154469371/pdf/Inclusion-matters-the-foundation-for-shared-prosperity.pdf /15ç08.2022.

[16] ·https://en.unesco.org/culture-development/transversal-approaches/social-inclusion /13.09.2022

# SECTION 2

## Using Arts and Cultural Activities as a Tool in Adult Education for Vulnerable Groups

# SECTION 2

## Using Arts and Cultural Activities as a Tool in Adult Education for Vulnerable Groups

### 2.1 The Impact of Art and Culture on the Physical and Emotional Well-being

Arts and cultural activities are powerful tools to support vulnerable groups' emotional, mental and physical well-being. Art helps individuals to express their hidden feelings and fears in different ways than verbal communication. Exploring emotions helps to **improve mental health, relaxation, managing behaviours, develop social skills, self-confidence and cognitive behaviours.** Implementing public activities using art and culture as a tool could **improve creativity, productivity, awareness, cultural entrepreneurship, identity, authenticity, cultural diversity, and national development.**

Much scientific research suggests art is a type of language for expressing feelings and thoughts that helps to understand the essence of personality. Branches of art, such as visual arts, writing, music, drama, dance and movement, might serve as creative tools for individuals, especially vulnerable groups, to express themselves and reveal their emotions freely. According to Jill Leckey (2011), **art serves as the most internal way of expression.** Art materials such as paper, paint, pencil and clay are encouraged to use in this expression method for individuals to discover their feelings.[17]

Jill Leckey (2011) and Inger Öster (2014)[18] emphasised the benefits of creative activities for mental and physical well-being. Studies have concluded that engaging in creative activities can **reduce stress and depression** and may serve as an auxiliary tool to alleviate the burden of chronic diseases.

Moreover, the development of mental well-being and soft skills are other benefits that can be gained through participation in arts and cultural activities. It is a fact that technical skills are essential for entering the labour market.

[17] LECKEY, J. (2011). The Therapeutic Effectiveness of Creative Activities on Mental Well-Being: A Systematic Review of the Literature, Journal of psychiatric and mental health nursing, 18, 6, 501-509.

[18] ÖSTER, I. (2014) Art Therapy During Radiotherapy – A Five-Year Follow-Up Study With Women Diagnosed With Breast Cancer, The Arts in Psychotherapy, 36-40

Photo by Teatr Grodzki

However, recently, hiring trends indicate an increasing demand for soft skills (such as teamwork, good communication, etc.), and thus their importance should not be underestimated. Soft skills are non-technical interpersonal skills which can be developed out of the classroom with the help of arts and cultural activities.

Creating, communicating, expressing and symbolising their emotions and needs are essential for individuals' physical and emotional well-being. Creative activities positively impact individuals by reducing stress and integrating the body, mind, and spirit. Also, as stated by authorities, art has benefits in developing new **soft skills,** maintaining better **resilience** in life experiences and helping to **overcome past traumas,** such as physical and emotional pain, **facing difficult situations, and death.**

Some related systematic reviews are as follows:

In 2021 Laia Delfa-Lobato and her colleagues researched the benefits of artistic and cultural activities on people with cognitive impairment. In this systematic review, researchers focused on exploring the benefits of different arts and cultural activities modalities with evidence from 145 studies from other databases. These studies all included various types of arts and cultural activities. Meanwhile, they implemented multiple activities with different durations and frequencies.

Remarkably, twenty-eight studies included music therapy as a modality in their investigations. Seven studies mentioned theatre (performing arts), which can be a helpful tool to explore humans' emotional and social beings deeply. Appreciating and creating visual arts were the most performed interventions, and there are sixty-seven studies or reviews mentioning therapy, including visual arts. Two clinical studies are focused on pottery activities. Forty-four studies included combined dance therapy. Three studies referred to literary arts, and nine articles brought up storytelling. Finally, thirteen clinical studies or reviews reported on more than one type of intervention modality.

Photo by Utopia Education and Art

Nevertheless, all these studies have shown significant therapeutic improvements in social skills (socialisation, communication, self-esteem), cognitive skills (reductions in apathy, sadness, agitation, anxiety, and depression), quality of life, emotional and physical well-being.[19]

Moreover, Rosie Perkins conducted a study in 2021 in the United Kingdom about engaging arts with social connectedness. There were 5892 adults who participated in an evaluation questionnaire within this study. Results showed that the majority of respondents (82%) agree that they felt socially connected during the implementation of the study. The findings state, "Arts engagement can support social connectedness among adults in the UK through multiple pathways, providing large-scale evidence of the important role that the arts can play in supporting social public health."[20]

Furthermore, in 2018 Anita Jensen published a study on using art interventions to improve mental health and well-being. She reviewed twenty studies focused on the benefits of participating in art interventions on psychological and physical health problems.[21]

In conclusion of all these studies, arts and cultural activities are beneficial in enhancing individuals' mental, emotional and physical well-being. People tend to get to know themselves better, define feelings and needs, build self-confidence and boost motivation through arts and cultural activities.

[19]Lobato, L. (2021) Benefits of Cultural Activities on People With Cognitive Impairment: A Systematic Review, Frontiers in Psychology, 25 November 2021
Please note, the Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.762392/full#supplementary-material 20.08.2022

[20] Perkins R. (2021) Arts Engagement Supports Social Connectedness in Adulthood: Findings from the HEartS Survey

[21] Jensen A. (2018) The Use of Arts Interventions for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Health Settings, Perspectives in Public Health, 30 April 2018

## 2.2 Using Arts and Cultural Activities for Promoting the Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups

Artistic expression provides a unique means for people to express themselves, encouraging participation in cultural life, facilitating access to culture and promoting social inclusion. There is broad recognition of arts and cultural education's social and cultural well-being dimensions, including its healing effect in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

Integrating arts education into non-formal education also provides a diverse learning environment. Arts and cultural activities have the potential to unlock and express emotion, build friendships and unite communities around a shared vision of peace. They provide much-needed stress relief and can be tools for survival. Equally, artistic expression fosters social inclusion and stability, ensuring peace and preventing tension and conflict.[22]

Much research shows that arts and cultural activities have benefits for promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2016), **social inclusion** is defined as "[…] the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights".[23]

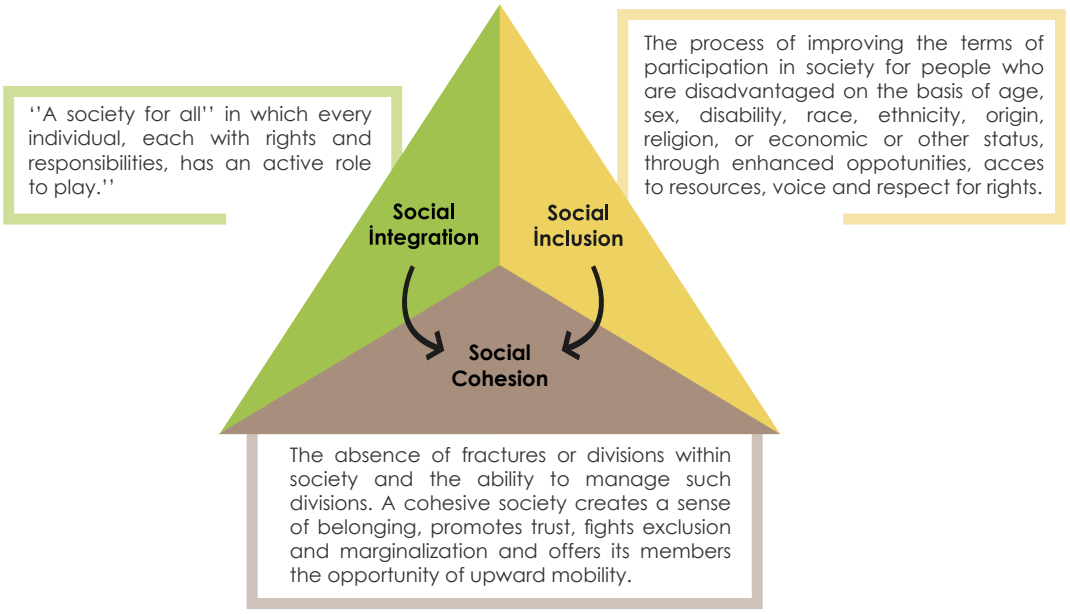
A more recent study conducted by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan & Kyushu University Joint Research Team (2021) describes "inclusion" as **"unity in diversity"**[24] In contrast, other ways to understand inclusion could be associating it with the notions of integration and acceptance.[25]

[22] https://en.unesco.org/culture-development/transversal-approaches/social-inclusion /13.09.2022

[23] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016). Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development (pp. 1-22). New York: United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/full-report.pdf

[24] The Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan & Kyushu University Joint Research Team. (2021). Social Inclusion through Culture and the Arts: A Handbook for Beginners [Ebook]. Retrieved from http://www.sal.design.kyushu-u.ac.jp/pdf/Handbook_for_Beginners_SAL.pdf

[25] Kuppers, P. (2004). Disability and contemporary performance. New York: Routledge.




Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2016). Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development (pp. 21). New York: United Nations.

In Alain de Botton and John Armstrong's book "Art as therapy" (2013), art has a role in the inclusion of vulnerable groups and it has beneficial effects on individuals' social life and well-being:

> *"Art can bring the fruits of experience to be remembered and makes it renewable. A tool that will keep precious memories and our best intuitions well. (…) It gives the opportunity to exalt sorrow:* ***Art has a rightful place in a good life.*** *(…) It acts as a stabiliser: Art reflects the essence of our good qualities in an extraordinary way. (…)* ***It helps us balance and guides us towards the best possibilities.*** *(…) It guides us in knowing ourselves: It can help us define the hard to put into words."*[26]

Engaging with arts and cultural activities supports social connectedness. Instead of solitude, being socially connected could be beneficial for public health. In 2010 Ed Hall published an article in the Journal of Intellectual Disability Research titled "Spaces of Social Inclusion and Belonging for People with Intellectual Disabilities". The paper defines people with intellectual disabilities as "socially excluded", and social inclusion policies research for this vulnerable group. The study highlights that various arts and cultural activities can benefit mental and physical health problems.

[26] Botton A., Armstrong J. Art as Therapy, Phaidon Press, P:64-65 Oct 14, 2013

Hall has reviewed 20 scientific articles about arts engagement, evidence-based health practice, participatory arts and cultural activities for well-being such as poetry, literature, dance, singing, music, visual and creative arts, etc. Results show that arts and cultural programmes are beneficial and cost-effective ways to improve mental and physical health. Engagement in specially designed arts and cultural activities can reduce the intensity of physical symptoms and improve mental health issues.[27]

Photo by Nyitott Kör

In 2019, WHO Regional Office for Europe published an extensive report on the scientific evidence of the benefits of arts and cultural activities, called ***'What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being?'***. The report reviewed 3,500 studies and proved that "Arts can have a potential impact on mental and physical health".

Christopher Bailey, responsible for the Art and Health Initiative of the World Health Organisation (WHO), quotes Carl Gustav Jung, founder of analytical psychology, who said that **loneliness is not the absence of people, but the inability to express what matters most.** Bailey states that participation in arts and cultural activities can help people cope with everyday stresses, improve physical and social well-being, enhance productivity, and find meaning and joy in difficult situations. These benefits are life-changing for people who need treatment, their caregivers and even those who are healthy.[28]

The above-mentioned report provides evidence of the potential value of the arts in **promoting health, improving or preventing various mental and physical health conditions,** and **treating or managing acute and chronic conditions that occur throughout life.** The research covered various arts activities and explored programs delivered in multiple settings, from hospitals to primary care communities and homes. The first theme emerging from this research is considerable evidence supporting the health benefits of art.

[27] E. Hall, Spaces of Social Inclusion and Belonging for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, March 2010

[28] https://newsrnd.com/news/2022-07-30-christopher-bailey--head-of-the-who-art-and-health-initiative--%22participating-in-art-has-a-healing-dimension%22.Hk3fd4maq.html 20.08.2022.

The WHO report reviewed uncontrolled pilot studies, randomised controlled trials, small-scale cross-sectional surveys, analyses of nationally representative longitudinal cohort studies, individual case studies and community-wide ethnographies. Overall, this review's results point to art's powerful impact on mental and physical health and how arts **promote social inclusion by supporting social connectedness.**

The second theme of the research is to focus on conditions for which complete solutions are unavailable. Arts promises to provide **a holistic perspective and tackle difficult or complex problems for which there are currently no adequate solutions.**

A third theme is that the evidence base demonstrated the effectiveness of art interventions and **the economic benefits.** Some arts interventions were more practical and profitable than possible health interventions.[29]

With their involvement in artistic activities, vulnerable adults could take part in processes that require decision-making and relationship-building, assuming the position of active agents rather than that of powerless, marginalised subjects for whom decisions are to be taken by others. In this light, artistic activity contributes to combating disconnection by adopting a participatory approach to social interactions.

Consequently, art can pioneer, as a vehicle for **social change in the public sphere,** through positive spillovers from artistic/ cultural activities. These spillovers may include sharpening a number of social dexterities (e.g. decision-making, cooperation, democratic debate, etc.) that ultimately **facilitate healthy social exchanges and test social boundaries.**

According to Fox and Macpherson (2015), the ripple effect is even more remarkable when vulnerable people are asked to partner with non-vulnerable ones during activities, bridging the gap between two seemingly very different social groups.[30]

[29] Fancourt D, Finn S. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019 (Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report 67), p.52-53, available at: https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289054553 20.08.2022

[30] Fox, A., & Macpherson, H. (2015). Inclusive arts practice and research. London: Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group.

Nonetheless, apart from its therapeutic use, **artistic activity can also be the catalyst in creating an inclusive environment** that encourages participation instead of passivity. The purpose is to break away from the separatist culture perspective that largely views vulnerable people as incapacitated to create - except if they have to do so for purely therapeutic reasons.[31]

Photo by Teatr Grodzki

[31] Rix, P. (2003). 'Anything is Possible': The Arts and Social Inclusion. Policy Futures In Education, 1(4), 716-730. doi: 10.2304/pfie.2003.1.4.8

# SECTION 3

## Designing and Delivering Arts and Cultural Activities as an Educational Method for Vulnerable Groups

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The approach to designing an activity undoubtedly affects the quality and productivity of the process. There are many variables such as; the professionals, the target group, and to what extent the participants will show participation. It is also essential to define how strictly or how flexible the trainers will form the programme and if it is possible to adjust it depending on the implementation progress.

During the organisation of the activity, one of the key concerns is **how to reach the target group.** While publishing an open call for receiving applications is an option, it is also possible to identify the participants through professionals or people who already have contact with members of this target group.

Moreover, each organisation might have different methods to reach their target group. In most cases it is necessary to ask for the cooperation of other organisations who have experience in working with the target group. Trainers should also **consider asking for the help of professionals or volunteers who will support the implementation of the activity.**

While developing the training, planning a face-to-face or online programme would have different needs and outcomes. There are other components such as the duration of the training programme, the number and length of the sessions, the programme's content, the number of participants and necessary training materials.

Finally, trainers should also **consider the evaluation of the training.** They should consider target groups' needs and ability levels while deciding on the type of evaluation. For instance, interviews might serve better than questionnaires for some vulnerable groups. They also need to determine what phase of the training (before, during and after) the evaluation should take place.

In this section, the issues mentioned above will be analysed, considering the characteristics and needs of the specific vulnerable groups. The tips and guidelines will be presented on how to design and implement artistic and cultural activities with the participation of the selected vulnerable groups.

The experience of the consortium partners is based on the pilot implementation of certain artistic and cultural activities during the previous stages of the project. Highlights will be shared, referring in particular to the specific discipline of art carried out during the workshops. The general context of implementing cultural activities for vulnerable individuals will also be outlined.

## 3.1 Methodology for Designing and Implementing Cultural Activities for Homeless People

### 3.1.1 Approach for Designing Arts and Cultural Activities

In the framework of arts-based social inclusion and non-formal education overall, it is of fundamental importance not to merely "design activities for" any vulnerable group but to have the activities "designed for and with" the contribution of the group itself. In this respect, activities should be designed and implemented in a participatory approach. Desk review and needs assessment should be before any other organisational step, as social inclusion should be conceptualised in the light of the target group's needs and adversities, aiming at having them addressed.

Identifying the needs mentioned above and the participants' interests, expectations, and skills could ideally take place through consulting the target group not only beforehand but also throughout the whole procedure and through constantly seeking their perspective and bringing it into account. After assessing needs, skills, and aspirations, proceed to explore tools that could better respond to them and adjust them to the intervention's potential (budget and time limitations).

Participants should be involved in the whole process to achieve the maximum out of the expected outcomes. Towards this direction, it is crucial to have a flexible and systematically revised action plan and establish a relationship of trust and cooperation with the targeted population.

Homeless individuals are a seriously underprivileged target group, facing a lot of precarity and instability. A participatory approach could prevent the high dropout rates to a certain extent by adjusting the activity to the trainees' capacity to attend. However, in terms of organisation, the design should be as open and punctual to inspire reliability and engagement with the target group.

**In a few words:**

- **Ask them first! Trust them and their input!**
- **Avoid assuming and deciding for them!**
- **Counter the process of hindering the socially excluded and "unproductive".**
- **Please make sure the participants are actively engaged, respecting their limitations while at the same time encouraging their sense of initiative in the process of decision-making.**

### 3.1.2 Organising Arts and Cultural Activities

Whilst there is no universally accepted definition of homelessness, FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, advocates for a broad understanding which encompasses rooflessness, houselessness and inadequate and insecure housing. To provide a common framework through which to discuss homelessness, FEANTSA attempts to cover all living situations which amount to homelessness or housing exclusion:

- Rooflessness (people living rough and people in emergency accommodation);

- Houselessness (people in accommodation for the homeless, in women's shelters, in housing for migrants, people due to be released from institutions and people receiving long-term support due to homelessness);

- Living in insecure housing (people living in insecure tenancies, under threat of eviction or violence);

- Living in inadequate housing (living in unfit housing, non-conventional dwellings or in situations of extreme overcrowding).

It is rather challenging to reach out and establish impactful cooperation with people experiencing precarious living conditions, significantly different from others. Thus, for efficiency reasons, the attempted approach should consider this differentiation.

In case houseless people are to be addressed, it's recommended to **contact them through organisations and institutions providing them with emergency housing.**

Such entities will have already established regular contact with their beneficiaries. Cooperating with them could offer insight into which individuals would be more prone to engage in such a project.

These organisations can also provide the setting within which the call for applications could be more visibly addressed (by using notice boards, by hosting an informative session or a workshop, among other means). Such an approach could also be adopted for homeless people in an emergency housing plan.

Regarding people living rough, insecure or inadequate housing, who do not reside in one place altogether, the option of street work could be an alternative. However, an individual approach would make establishing a solid relationship with the beneficiaries rather demanding and time-consuming.

Actions held in public spaces of disadvantaged neighbourhoods could attract the target group's interest. In this case, especially if such an approach takes place without the contribution of another organisation active in the field of street work, a significant investment of time for the recruiting process might be necessary.

Last but not least, an online open call for receiving applications would be suggested as a last option. Homeless people are a complex target group to engage in, and open calls are less likely to mitigate low responsiveness.

### 3.1.3 Developing a Training Programme

Regarding the means of implementation of the activity, it is recommended that it takes place face to face. Probably, the targeted population may not own the technological equipment (internet connection, electronic devices) that an online connection requires.

Photo by Equal Society

Also, the benefits of face-to-face interaction help capacity building and sharpening communication skills. Nevertheless, the prospect of online sessions should not be excluded during challenging times, such as in a possible pandemic.

**Choosing the right venue for inclusive activities is as important as choosing the proper methodology.** The venue will support better learning with a setting appropriate to the cultural activity to be developed. The learning environment itself is often a neglected element of the learning process. Make sure that it is an easily accessible place, in terms of proximity and access via public transport, as well as a safe one in terms of privacy. The more pleasant and adjusted to the activity's character, the better impression and inspiration it will create for attendants from a severely underprivileged setting.

The duration of the training program should be determined based on the difficulty level of the selected learning/cultural tool and the subsequent capacity-building needs, as well as on the availability and willingness of the participants. Despite these parameters, the more the participants get familiar with the tools and learning processes, the more substantial the impact of the activity will be. However, the arrangements for the participants should be as flexible as possible to adjust to their needs when necessary.

In addition, it could be challenging to have this target group committed for a period that surpasses their daily life's future visibility. **Offering a medium-term perspective is ideal, with the option of prolonging if needed.** The activity should not gain an obligatory dimension that would oppose the creation of a voluntary commitment on behalf of the participants.

Nevertheless, it is undoubted that long-term interventions are more likely to offer the assistance needed for promoting the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, who tend to receive fragmented and insufficient support.

The duration and frequency of sessions should also be examined and decided on the availability of the target group. More frequent encounters promote systematic attendance on behalf of the participants. At the same time, meeting every week, for example, could be too intensive compared to the rhythm of the participants' life and the time they need to prepare for the sessions.

The group dynamic should also be explored and facilitated in case group meetings are preferred. Team-building activities and non-formal education tools should be utilised to create a safe learning environment for everyone.

For people who might be suffering from a process of isolation, group dynamics play a significant role in the empowerment of the group itself. Whether the participants are already familiar with each other or not, in case a collective approach is adopted, trainers and facilitators should devote sufficient time to the team-building process.

**The training program's planning and content should be based on the outcome of the needs assessment of the candidates.** It should be executed by experienced professionals and be frequently revised to meet the arising needs of the participants.

Small rituals at the beginning and the end of the sessions to create repetitive patterns within the session help to promote safety and comfort. Positive reinforcements such as snacks, drinks and appropriate equipment would enhance the participants' comfort.

While determining the number of participants, trainers should consider how prepared the individuals are to engage in a team activity. As the particular target group is relatively exposed to isolation, ensure that everybody is in a position to join a collaborative venture. In principle, it is better to work in small groups so that there is more time for everyone to receive the guidance and support they need.

Planning individual sessions, if possible, might ease a person's tension. For example, in the radio pilot activity in Greece, conducting an individual session instead of a group session and a subsequent podcast recording with a participant in distress helped them not only overcome their negative feelings but also verbalise and share precious personal narratives. In such moments, the guidance of a psychologist would be helpful.

Suitable visual materials, avoiding long texts and written guidance would help participants to approach and understand the format more easily because homeless people might struggle with literacy to a certain extent.

### 3.1.4 How to Evaluate a Training Programme

Monitoring and evaluation are core processes to take place throughout the implementation period, i.e. before, during and after the cultural/artistic activity.

It is crucial to incorporate feedback sessions and other assessment tasks at the end of each session to keep in touch with the participants' points of view and needs.

As the production of written speech might be too demanding for this target group, make sure to engage them in more interactive and less formal evaluation formats. Giving time for feedback and debriefing sessions at the end of every session/meeting, as well as conducting interviews before and after the activity's implementation, would contribute to the alignment of the activity to the participants' needs, difficulties and expectations.

## 3.2 Methodology for Designing and Implementing Cultural Activities for People with Visual Impairments

### 3.2.1 Approach for Designing Arts and Cultural Activities

The training program should be designed by the trainer/trainers who (preferably) have some experience using artistic methods in general and feel comfortable performing activities proposed to participants. Nevertheless, they might still face a severe challenge in passing their knowledge to participants who cannot see. Thus, the preparatory stage of the training is of great importance.

Before designing the activity, it is highly recommended to consult the representatives of the blind and visually impaired community, and experienced professionals working with them. Many aspects of the training implementation need to be discussed, foreseen and planned.

First, communicating and establishing contact with blind and visually impaired persons during the workshop activities should be clarified. The trainers must understand how important it is to **explain everything straightforwardly and be ready to work together with participants and let them "see" things with their hands.** Sometimes it is needed to directly lead blind persons, to help them move around and find directions.

Also, the **workshop venue should be adequately prepared, easily accessible to the participants** and large enough to ensure comfort and freedom of movement, with no dangerous obstacles.

**Safety should be ensured, for instance,** if there is a danger of falling from the stairs.

In this context, it should also be mentioned that transporting visually impaired persons to the workshop venue can be a challenge. They do not drive themselves and often have problems also with the use of public transport. Such difficulties should be considered, and if possible, the transport should be provided/facilitated by the organisers. It can prevent the rotation of participants and a high rate of absenteeism.

**Flexibility, openness to challenges, spontaneity and readiness to answer the needs of individual participants and following group dynamics are significant when working with people who cannot see.** Some specific tasks may turn out to be very difficult for the participants. For example, a seemingly uncomplicated instruction to move concretely can be a problem for a blind person. So, the **trainers should always look for solutions and propose alternatives** by supporting actions (for instance, working in pairs).

There is a big difference between blind and visually impaired persons involved in various rehabilitation activities before and those who have not. They are usually more prepared to take up new challenges if they have already participated in such activities. Otherwise, they might be afraid of trying new things and, therefore, need a different approach (more time and additional warm-up activities). Thus, trainers should know about the group members before they start planning the program, and it will let them work more efficiently and prepare for various obstacles.

### 3.2.2 Organising Arts and Cultural Activities

The community of blind people is closed and isolated to a large extent. Many limitations resulting from sight dysfunction restrict their daily functioning. Thus visually impaired persons often stick together, and it is not easy for them to act in an unknown environment. Also, they are often wary of new people and new self-development opportunities. Therefore, many customary ways of advertising cultural activities would not work in that case.

The most effective method of reaching the blind community is through the network of local branches of the national organisations gathering blind people and representing their needs and rights all over Europe.

This organisational structure can facilitate access to visually impaired persons who operate locally and communicate/cooperate. However, each branch's level of activity is different; not all operate actively in their local/regional society.

Another way of transmitting information and linking blind people is through magazines published in Braille, enlarged print and in electronic version (for instance, as a newsletter in HTML, RTF format) and recorded on a CD. Moreover, it is advisable to use local radio to spread information about various activities and cultural offerings to blind and partially sighted persons who often listen to the radio. This specific target group is also active in social media since many use speech synthesisers. Thus, they can receive and forward messages via email, too.

Regardless of the choice of the specific promotion method, the message about cultural classes and events will be compelling if recommended by a visually impaired person.

The knowledge and skills of professionals and organisations experienced in working with this target group would be beneficial while planning and implementing any cultural activity. Their practical background in supporting persons with sight dysfunction might help recruit participants and navigate them successfully through the creative process.

Also, the involvement of assisting volunteers who can see in the artistic activities together with the blind will be productive in achieving the expected results. In addition, it will contribute to broader integration processes.

### 3.2.3 Developing a Training Programme

Organising online cultural activities for visually impaired and blind people is not advisable. Direct contact with them enables the possibility of leading their hands in some cases, and directly helping them to perform the tasks is an essential success factor for using various artistic methods.

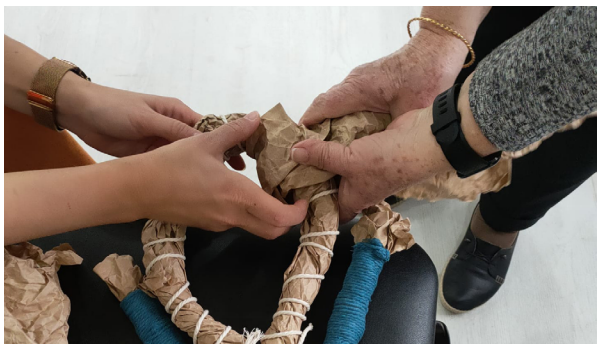

Photo by Utopia Education and Art

It might be hard to explain everything verbally, and the sense of touch matters significantly in this learning process. Thus, it is recommended to run arts-based workshops face-to-face, considering the following suggestions regarding specific choices and decisions.

There is no strict time frame for the training program, and it can be adapted to various needs and availability of the participants. One-time workshops or more extended series of sessions can be applied. However, planning the working process as a complete training run and including an open presentation of the group achievements at the end can be recommended. **The members of this target group need more time for completed handcrafts which is particularly difficult for them.** Acting under time pressure works against motivating and engaging participants.

Moreover, such a more comprehensive creative experience contributes to getting to know one another better and achieving long-lasting effects. Even though spending a few hours a day with puppets can be rewarding and eye-opening, the learning experience that lasts for a few weeks or months might result in fundamental changes in people's lives.

Photo by Teatr Grodzki

Probably the best form of implementing workshops for blind and visually impaired persons would be the two-and-a-half-hour sessions (including a comfort break) once a week for two or three months (or even longer, if the group shows interest in the specific kind of creative experience).

There are many possible ways of planning and implementing workshop activities to introduce visually impaired and blind people to creative activities. However, the program's content should thoroughly analyse the group's needs, abilities and limitations. Still, some general rules and approaches can be specified.

**Verbal communication and expression are essential when working with visually impaired and blind people.** Even though some cultural activities, like puppetry art, focus on visual narration, often with no words, the spoken text is also needed in such cases.

Otherwise, the beneficiaries would lack their usual way of establishing relationships with others and expressing themselves.

Moreover, in the case of theatrical actions and other visual art disciplines, the audio description of the final presentation might create an additional, helpful communication channel and enable the reception of the final artwork by the visually impaired audience members.

Finding a suitable role for each participant is another important contribution to achieving significant social inclusion results. Not all visually impaired training participants might feel comfortable fulfilling all the tasks. However, it is always possible that everyone can propose a valuable contribution to the shared creative process. In the pilot puppetry training conducted in Poland, one blind man accepted the offer to sing a final song during the performance. He was not interested in puppetry, but singing was his greatest passion. As mentioned above, the optimum number of training participants is 10-14, including voluntary assistants who can see because their presence is significant.

Trainers should provide various materials that visually impaired people can explore with their hands. For instance, paper, fabric, plastic, and a variety of objects, would stimulate their creativity and facilitate the working process. In addition, some basic musical instruments like drums, cymbals, and various rattles can be handy.

### 3.2.4 How to Evaluate a Training Programme

Different ways of evaluating creative activities can be used, depending on their goals, duration and form. In the case of implementing a more extended training period, the ex-ante and ex-post evaluation is reasonable. It can be supplemented with some evaluation measures also during the training. However, limiting the evaluation to just one survey after the session is better if there is a one-time workshop.

The easiest and most effective way of getting feedback from the participants is to interview them, either individually or in a reflection circle within the group. **Reflection circles held after each session can become a "ritual" for the group,** strengthening the ties and relationships between participants and creating a self-expression space for everyone.

At the same time, they will be a source of information about self-development, personal achievements of the group members and inclusive effects, which is a vital part of the evaluation in this case.

Even though the primary way recommended for getting feedback from visually impaired training participants is through a direct conversation, email exchange and the use of other Internet communicators can work.

As stated above, many blind individuals use speech synthesisers and are active in social media.

In addition to the above-described practices, contacting training participants sometime after the training process can bring valuable findings. It might happen that some of them will be making use of the creative experience gained in different life situations and will further develop new skills and knowledge.

Finally, participants who participated in the Poland pilot stated they felt more **self-confident, motivated, socially engaged, and relaxed** and admitted that **their well-being had improved** after the training.

## 3.3 Methodology for Designing and Implementing Cultural Activities for Beneficiaries of the Social Integration Income

### 3.3.1 Approach for Designing Arts and Cultural Activities

Training programs using artistic methods should be designed by trainers already familiar with developing cultural activities, mainly with vulnerable groups. Their work experience is decisive in achieving better results and getting a broader impact from these training sessions.

The beneficiaries of the Social Integration Income belong to a very particular vulnerable group with sensitive personal and social characteristics that trainers should consider when planning a training program. Because some of these members are resistant, uncommitted and unpredictable, the trainers must be flexible and prepared for modifications to the ongoing programme. Due to mental health problems and addictions (alcohol and drugs), low educational qualifications, and economical insufficiency, these issues have hindered their social inclusion process and sometimes forced them to resist any training participation.

The low educational qualifications of the participants may be one of the biggest obstacles in the development of training because the group may have difficulties understanding some of the tasks. So, the activities should be very simple, the trainer should be very emphatic with the participants and must understand how important it is to explain everything straightforwardly.

Photo by Centro Social de Soutelo

Considering their emotional instability, these members can rapidly give up on the training. Therefore, during the implementation of the activities, the environment should be calm, informal and distressful. **Participants should have the opportunity to work on their rhythm.** The trainer should be attentive to group or individual behaviour, adjusting the communication and suiting the activities' development.

Regarding the planning of the training programme, it is the trainer's responsibility to organise and decide the activities. Due to the participants' lack of initiative and low literacy, it might be challenging to integrate their suggestions during the training. However, their opinions should be considered, and the activities should be adjusted according to their abilities and opinions.

The activities should be planned in a **simple, objective and flexible way,** using **clear language and adaptable to the different needs of the participants.** Thus, such a training environment will **enable participants' engagement and motivation.**

### 3.3.2 Organising Arts and Cultural Activities

The trainers, who want to organise cultural and artistic training sessions with the Social Integration Income beneficiaries, should primarily establish contact with the social workers who accompany this target group in the municipalities.

These professionals work closely with the individuals and know much about their personal histories. Thus, they can lead the trainers to select the appropriate participants who would benefit from the training.

After the professionals select participants, it is essential to hold individual meetings to introduce the training (objectives, number of sessions, activities to be carried out, and evaluation of the training) and clarify any doubts that may arise. Also, they must sign a General Data Protection consent form at these meetings.

Besides the trainers, it would be beneficial to **have the presence of other professionals, especially psychologists.**

### 3.3.3 Developing a Training Programme

Training sessions using artistic and cultural methodologies are very interactive and practical. The training should preferably be face-to-face as it allows better interaction among the participants and will improve their capacity-building and communication skills. This vulnerable group needs to socialise and interact with others to recognise and work on their social-emotional skills, allowing them to face their daily life challenges.

Photo by Centro Social de Soutelo

Considering this targeted population's economic vulnerability and thus the lack of material and technical conditions (computer and internet), participating in online sessions would be challenging for them. Nevertheless, online sessions are an option in case of compelling reasons, such as it was during the pandemic.

The **training venue should be a quiet and safe environment where the participants feel well and inspired** to continue the training. Due to the economic insufficiency of the targeted population, it is necessary to guarantee that it is an accessible place with good access to public transport.

The duration and frequency of the training should be defined according to the learning programme's needs and the participants' interests. Firstly, it should be the social workers who plan and direct the training programme because they are the ones who know the beneficiaries' real needs.

The duration of the training should be planned considering the participants' economic difficulties, resistance to participating in training sessions and emotional fragility.

Based on the experiences from the pilot implementations in Portugal, a duration that will not exceed twelve sessions (for three months), once a week, with a maximum of two hours per session, would be ideal. During the session, there should be breaks adjusted to individual needs.

Undoubtedly, long-term interventions can be more effective and efficient in terms of social inclusion of vulnerable groups, enabling them to achieve better results and impact.

**Working in small groups, with a maximum of ten participants, would be more effective.** This number seems the most appropriate, as it will allow the trainer to pay attention to each participant's needs and facilitate group interaction.

Most of the individuals in this targeted group are isolated from society, so **using effective group dynamics** can create a more comfortable and confident learning environment. The participants must feel safe and secure to connect more actively and engagingly.

### 3.3.4 How to Evaluate a Training Programme:

Monitoring and evaluation are important processes that should take place throughout the training. In the beginning, the evaluation tools will serve to measure and understand the trainees' expectations and needs. During the implementation, they show what is going well and what should change. At the end of the training, they help to understand if the training has met participants' initial expectations and needs.

It might be challenging to use written evaluation tools, considering the low literacy level of this target group. Instead, short reflective conversations with participants selected for each session would be more practical. These conversations are moments of great importance for them because they will feel heard and included; thus, they would be likely to engage with the training more.

## 3.4 Methodology for designing and implementing cultural activities for women with & without disabilities

### 3.4.1 Approach for Designing Arts and Cultural Activities

Trainers with experience in the field should design arts and cultural training programmes. They should also be motivated and interested in working with adults in vulnerable situations.

For the design, preparation and follow-up of the activity, it is essential to collaborate with specialist professionals who can advise and accompany the trainers, transmitting their knowledge and previous experience, especially in the case of intellectual disability. The trainer must design the activity to have the necessary tools and resources, and it is important to maintain continuous monitoring and evaluation of the learning process. This way, the planning is established in a flexible and adaptable way to the necessary changes presented by the group.

The methodology must include a participatory approach. **Human beings must participate, be part of a group and feel included in society.** However, many people who suffer exclusion feel that this vital need is interrupted. If we promote participation, we strengthen the possibilities of transformation, both individually and collectively, generating autonomy, greater openness and confidence and a more significant impact and quality of life for people.

Artistic creation provides the opportunity to generate spaces for participation and active listening. The trainer must motivate the group with supporting social interaction and a positive approach to the difficulties that may arise in the activity. **The training must involve an integral process involving human interaction, beyond just transmitting technical knowledge.**

Photo by Espacio Rojo

### 3.4.2 Organising Arts and Cultural Activities

In order to approach vulnerable groups, it is important to collaborate with **professionals from the psychosocial field**, who accompany and get to know the

participants beforehand. This way, verifying if they can **take advantage of the activity according to their needs and interests** is possible.

In the case of adults with intellectual disabilities, this referral is almost essential for the success of any activity. Society tends to underestimate the creative capacity of people with disabilities, and **prejudices and stereotypes can be obstacles** when working with these vulnerable groups. Broadening the knowledge of the implementing organisation with professionals or organisations with previous experience can help to value their skills and talents above and beyond their circumstances.

For women in vulnerable situations, it is advisable to establish collaboration with organisations specialised in gender perspective. These organisations would have experience working with the target group to help vulnerable women to **increase self-esteem, join occupational training and the labour market.** The professionals who work with the target group can provide beneficial information to make the training more effective and integrative.

Immigrant women have needs that differ from immigrant men or other women, and their occupation is mainly related to domestic work and caregiving. Identifying the institutional resources destined for this purpose and knowing the specific needs of this group will facilitate the planning of the artistic/cultural activity and the establishment of priorities.

The trainers can offer informative sessions at local associations, and announcements of the training can be posted on the notice boards. Moreover, a workshop can be held, and professionals can be invited who can help to reach out to the possible participants.

Lastly, education professionals in the social inclusion field can accompany the training process and help with conflicts and socio-emotional difficulties that the groups may present.

### 3.4.3 Developing a Training Programme

Although artistic/cultural activities are usually organised face-to-face, an online training programme is feasible for people with a high professional qualification or previous experience in the field.

However, it is crucial to work face-to-face in the case of dealing with vulnerable groups for the considerable benefits brought to them.

Based on the ceramic workshop's experience within the scope of the pilot activity in Spain, an online training programme would be effective only if the participants have a professional qualification or previous experience in this field.

Considering the nature and qualities of the clay, it requires a professional to accompany all phases of the creation process. Also, it might be difficult for people with low economic resources to afford the necessary clay-making tools.

A long-term training programme would be more beneficial because **developing an artistic activity requires time, dedication and a specific technical process**, especially for people with disabilities. The duration will depend on the type of artistic activity and the needs of the specific target group. Based on the experience with the pilot ceramic workshop in Spain, developing a program with a minimum of two-hour long sessions four times a month would be ideal for a school year calendar.

Moreover, it would be beneficial to limit the number of participants, for example, a maximum number of 8 in mixed groups of people with and without disabilities per session. This number can be increased to 10 per session in the case of groups of young people with social difficulties.

While working with people with disabilities, the trainer must dedicate, assist and listen with greater individual attention to the participants. Moreover, it is essential to maintain a productive learning environment to establish a trusting relationship with the participants and support cooperation in the group.

Finally, besides the materials needed to develop the ceramics activity, it is recommended to support the training with external resources such as art books, music, reproduction of sculptures, and group visits to local museums.

Photo by Espacio Rojo

### 3.4.4 How to Evaluate a Training Programme

The United Nations Educational Organisation (UNESCO) recognises and promotes non-formal education as a tool for empowerment and social transformation. **The essential of non-formal education is flexibility and adaptability to different social contexts.**

Regarding the evaluation of a training program, it is essential to carry out a continuous evaluation, ideally designed from the planning of the activity that contains a variety of methods and resources.

It is recommended to use individual questionnaires or interviews to determine the participants' expectations, previous knowledge of the activity and their socio-emotional state before the training.

These indicators provide relevant information to plan the sessions, form the groups and compare them at the end of the training with the planned objectives.

When using questionnaires, they should be accessible to the group's diversity so that participants can also recognise the knowledge and learning acquired.

At the end of each session, the trainer should make a group record sheet to reflect on aspects of behaviour, communication, participation,bonding with professionals, topics of interest and the emotions and sensations perceived in the group.

Regarding the development of the sessions, it is critical to assess whether the proposed activity fits the target groups and whether they can achieve the objectives. Also, it is beneficial to evaluate the materials used, the space, the tools, the time and the resources available.

## 3.5 Methodology for Designing and Implementing Cultural Activities for People with Mental and Physical Disabilities, People in Psychiatric Care, Young Adults with Low-income

### 3.5.1 Approach for Designing Arts and Cultural Activities

As a general guideline, it is safe to say that the designing shall be done by the

trainers who are most familiar with the practice and have the necessary competence and experience in the field of education. Nevertheless, this is only part of sufficient preparation. It is necessary to have in-depth knowledge and experience about the needs of vulnerable target groups and involve a professional experienced with the specific target group.

Based on the experiences from the pilot implementations, it is risky but rewarding to involve the participants in the design phase. While working with a group of young people with low income, the participants were actively involved in designing the pilot puppetry workshop held in Hungary. After introducing the practice of making the puppets to the group, they brainstormed how they would plan a workshop based on the information they had recently learned. It was beneficial for both the trainers and the participants.

For various reasons, the remaining vulnerable target groups who participated in the pilot sessions in Hungary did not get involved in the planning process. One of the reasons was that this practice's key element was the introduction of a new technique. If the trainers shared the content with the participants in the early stage of the training, it might lack the element of surprise, which is the key to successful engagement. Another concern was that it might have been challenging for people with special needs to identify and express themselves.

Pre-meetings with the collaborators can help trainers to become informed about the state of mind and possible needs of the participants.

The recommended steps for designing arts and cultural activities are:

**1)** The trainers develop the first draft for the workshop.

**2)** A professional who works with the target group daily consults the written structure.

**3)** The trainers reevaluate the plan and develop a final draft. The draft should be flexible for later changes, such as skipping a task or two or adding a spare activity if needed.

**4)** At the beginning of the workshop, the trainers evaluate the circumstances (the venue's condition, the number of participants and their emotional state)

**5)** According to this information, adjustment of the plan could be necessary.

6) During the practical activity, the trainers should be able to react to the actual needs of the participants. E.g. if the participants respond negatively to a game introduced, then that game should be abandoned, or possible reasons could be mapped and used as a sub-focus if it is inside the activity's capacities. For instance, if the group lacks motivation, we can propose to become proactive together and feel ready to work.

7) After the practice, trainers and experts of the target group evaluate the process to plan the next occasion more effectively.

**The critical point is to find the balance between freedom and guidance**, and the best tool for this is planning the sessions based on the target group's expressed and supposed needs.

### 3.5.2 Organising Arts and Cultural Activities

From coordinational aspects, it is beyond doubt that having a **previous connection** with an organisation that contributes to the project implementation is helpful and makes the planning process more practical. It is helpful, especially when the organisation has more projects and programs simultaneously with more partners. While cooperating with a possible partner, it is essential to know about the organisation's profile before making a connection, aim for a social and collaborative methodology of the activities, and maintain a democratic approach.

There are also some disadvantages to be mentioned. Making direct connections instead of publishing open calls for participation might limit the **program's visibility**. In any case, trainers must have the necessary **information about the collaborating organisation.** Asking for the **support of a local organisation** is essential for providing information about the target group, for managing organisational and practical details, e.g. arranging an appropriate venue, and organising the sessions in harmony with participants' daily programmes. It is beneficial if the organisation offers assistance during and after the session(s) and provides consultation when needed. Furthermore, involving a specialist who knows the target group well might help trainers to get familiar with the specific group and run more productive sessions.

The supporting staff is significant for implementing an artistic/cultural activity.

Photo by Nyitott Kör

Even though running the process without long-term professionals or specialists is possible, there would be various conditions during the sessions where support is highly needed. For instance, if there are many participants in the workshop, it seems favourable to create smaller sub-groups consisting of 2-4 people for specific activities (e.g. sharing thoughts, talking about personal feelings or emotions). It is better to have more facilitators in the sessions who can pay attention not only to the groups but also to the individuals. Moreover, if a participant is facing difficulties during the process, it is crucial to **be able to provide the support needed.**

### 3.5.3 Developing a Training Programme

One relevant learning outcome of the organising process of the program is the 'principle' of **quality over quantity.** It might be challenging for vulnerable individuals to participate in long, intense sessions. On the other hand, moving slowly and having more **continuous occasions** would be more productive and appropriate for supporting participants' physical and mental well-being.

When planning the program's content, trainers should pay attention to certain factors: the ability and needs of the group, time management, available materials and support for implementing the sessions and venue. In the case of working with paper puppets, there is an advantage of **broadening the possible outcomes and processes** according to the target group.

Trainers should also be free to modify the process, experimenting with the session's structure. For instance, during the pilot implementation in Hungary, the trainers made some required changes after each workshop. They thus built two slightly differently structured sessions for the same target group (two different groups of young adults with low income). At the end of the following workshop, there were some apparent differences in the involvement of the participants.

When the workshop is for a specific target group of people with special needs, the number of participants should be proportional to the number of trainers, i.e. 3 participants per 1 trainer. According to the pilot implementation's experiences, this ratio has proven ideal.

However, running the sessions with a ratio of 4 or 5 participants per 1 trainer is also possible. With neurotypical participants, (minimum) two trainers can work with (maximum) 30 participants. With fewer participants, trainers can give more attention to individual processes.

While planning the duration of the training, scheduling sessions at regular intervals might be more efficient in exploring other positive outcomes. Lastly, it would be safe to say that four sessions with a duration of 90 minutes would be sufficient based on the puppetry pilot workshop's experiences in Hungary.

### 3.5.4 How to Evaluate a Training Programme

A questionnaire can be used as a follow-up activity, which has proven to be very useful and fruitful for further work with neurotypical participants. However, more informal and creative methods would be beneficial when working with people with special needs.

In some cases, the collaborating organisation can help to collect feedback from the participants about their experiences. This way, the participants could be honest and critical without the pressure of having to share them with the trainers. Trainers can also invite the participants to talk about their experiences during and after the training. It would be helpful to hear what part of the training resonated most with the participants. This information can highlight the well-working parts, and the parts that did not get feedback can be re-evaluated.

The evaluation can take place right after the training or a few weeks later. The advantage of the first is that the experience still stays remarkably fresh and vivid. However, if the participants are more likely to have enough time to experience the training outcomes in their lives, the evaluation data might be more relevant and informative.

## 3.6 Methodology for Designing and Implementing Cultural Activities for Young Adults with Economic Disadvantages and Seniors

### 3.6.1 Approach for Designing Arts and Cultural Activities

According to experiential learning principles and non-formal education tools, arts and cultural activities for vulnerable groups should be designed by competent

and experienced facilitators or trainers. Moreover, the learning process has to be engaged in a **"learning by doing"** perspective.

Photo by Utopia Education and Art

A participatory approach is essential for an inclusive training atmosphere. The programme needs a flexible flow that allows every participant to join the activities at their own pace. It would be beneficial to plan some warming up, energising and team-building activities besides the primary cultural activity and use them for starting every session and as often as needed.

The facilitators/trainers should try to motivate the participants to continue most of the sessions during the training process. It is essential to be patient and understanding towards the difficulties the participants could face and support social learning and communication opportunities within the group.

The trainers need to have **an inclusive approach** and an embracing attitude towards participants rather than fine skills and deep knowledge in the arts and culture field that they will use as a tool in this training. The main idea of developing and organising the training would be to teach vulnerable individuals new artistic methods and techniques, support them in developing their soft and social skills, and contribute to their mental and physical well-being.

It would be beneficial for the training process if the trainers have experience in working with the specific vulnerable target group. If necessary, trainers can research the vulnerable groups they will work with and request support from the organisations or social workers who work with those groups.

When considering designing a cultural activity for vulnerable groups, the soft skills that trainers need to have are common; **adaptability** and **flexibility.** Focusing on adapting or altering the programme and the attitude towards the participants would help to meet the demands and needs of participants and the current situation of the training. Therefore, the team running the training should be prepared well enough to react to the spontaneous changes and conflicts that may occur during the programme.

### 3.6.2 Organising Arts and Cultural Activities

Trainers can identify the target group by considering various measures, like rising needs in society, the accessibility of the vulnerable group and interaction possibilities with the organisations representing the vulnerable groups. In order to organise a cultural activity, it is better to identify the target group first and then proceed with contacting organisations representing those groups, social centres, municipalities or related community centres and volunteer centres.

After finding a partner organisation for collaboration, an announcement for the activity can be made among the organisation's members. Besides, **making an open public call** is always possible. The open call can be published on social media (web pages, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and WhatsApp groups) and shared with other organisations, community and volunteer centres.

Former connections can also help identify the target group and related organisations. It is possible to run the activity with other organisations that the trainers have already been in contact with or are collaborating on a different purpose. A positive outcome of these former connections would be the support needed to implement the activity from the other organisation that has experience working with the specific target group.

It would be very supportive for trainers if they receive any **technical and physical support** for handling the training material, helping go through the paperwork or ensuring safety and security by the collaborating organisation.

Also, **emotional support** would be highly beneficial when working with vulnerable groups, so a professional who works within the collaborating organisation can be asked to participate in the training process actively or occasionally. For instance, while working with seniors, the presence of a gerontologist, a psychologist or a social worker would be very supportive for participants besides the training staff.

In the case of young adults with economic disadvantages, a psychologist, a social worker or a volunteer can offer emotional support when needed. This specific target group has members who face many challenging situations in their personal lives due to the lack of sufficient economic sources. Because it is an empathetic and self-reflecting process, creating puppets might evoke some fragile emotions and pleasant ones for the participants.

Photo by Utopia Education and Art

Therefore, a professional who supports the trainer and the participants throughout the process would highly contribute to the training's quality and service. This supporting staff would also contribute to helping to raise the continuity rate of the participants in the training.

Finally, a volunteer, an organisation member or a professional would be beneficial to take photos, record videos and edit them for the project visibility because sometimes it might be challenging for the trainers to run the training and develop audiovisuals simultaneously.

Moreover, it would be beneficial if the trainers have a pre-meeting with the organisation regardless of whether they have a former collaboration or have just met each other. The training programme must be checked with the other organisation if it is appropriate and realistic to implement with the specific vulnerable target group.

Also, trainers should get prepared to meet the target group's needs. Checking the physical conditions and whether the potential activity venue is suitable for the training requirements and needs of participants would prevent many possible conflicts during the training activity. For instance, the venue should be well-ventilated, have proper sanitation facilities, and have a comfortable, spacious workspace for carrying out the arts and cultural events in a group work setting.

### 3.6.3 Developing a Training Programme

Planning and developing a programme draft for the training ahead would be highly beneficial. However, unexpected difficulties might occur during the training, so the programme should be flexible to make necessary changes to overcome these difficulties. Moreover, it is possible to plan the programme in various intensities and durations.

A 2-months long paper puppetry workshop, which consists of 8 sessions and 2 hours each, was planned with young adults with economic disadvantages in Türkiye. However, maintaining the continuity of the participants was a challenge during the implementation phase of the training.

Some participants reported that they had found jobs and some were still students and had exams in university, and some could not continue because of pandemic-related health issues. As a result, the duration was extended to 3 months with longer gaps between sessions.

Also another implementation, Utopia had planned a two weeks workshop with elderly adults, which consisted of 8 sessions, 1 hour each. However, the collaborating organisation requested a one-day intense workshop, so the team converted the programme into an 8-hour, day-long programme. The team had to adapt to the new circumstances quickly and alter the programme according to the current needs.

After the Covid 19 pandemic, it is widespread to modify any art, cultural, social, educational or professional event into a virtual one. However, in the case of vulnerable adults, a face-to-face activity's social and emotional positive outcomes could not be replaced with an online programme.

A real-life experience would contribute to participants' self-esteem, self-awareness, and social skills while offering an experiential learning experience for sparking creativity. Creating a space for participants to express themselves and get to know each other, helps them learn to cooperate and grow empathy for others.

Furthermore, to maintain a productive and inclusive training environment, it is important to limit the participation number, for example, 10-15 persons. For a group of this size, it is better to have at least two trainers leading the sessions. Art activities require much one-on-one attention and detailed work that requires time. If more staff participate in the training, participants would have a positive and fruitful experience.

It is also essential to encourage the participants to help each other to boost social interaction. In order to help participants feel ready for the training, trainers can start the sessions with energisers, ice breakers or any game suitable for the target group. Emphasising the needs, focusing on the process and keeping the expectations low of the results are also very important.

The materials do not have to be identical for every training activity.

Moreover, it would **improve the diversity and productivity** of the training if the participants contributed by bringing their recycled materials to individualise their artwork. Participants will be creating unique and individualised work, and the results will differ from each other. , creative activities have limitless possibilities and are excellent opportunities to try new ideas, **build self-esteem** and practise practical **decision-making skills.**

### 3.6.4 How to Evaluate a Training Programme

Photo by Utopia Education and Art

Both questionnaires and interviews can be used at the end of activities to evaluate the training programme. Also, to monitor the process, individual or group assessments can be done following each session, and participants can share their thoughts and feedback with trainers. Allowing the participants to express themselves adequately would also be very beneficial for improving the quality of the training. Being connected with participants and asking for constant feedback would help to adjust the sessions according to their needs.

Standard evaluation techniques like filling out long forms might be complicated for many vulnerable groups, so the team should look for creative solutions. Short and exciting digital forms that are easy to fill out, video interviews, quizzes or other creative feedback and reviewing techniques such as active reviewing, sociocracy voting, web tools and applications like Kahoot would be fun and practical.

During the pilot in Türkiye, participants and facilitators experienced valuable moments and shared a joyful, warm and friendly atmosphere. Creating and individualising the paper puppets and trying to perform them positively affected participants' self-expression and improved their **mental and emotional states.**

Even if some participants (from both target groups) lack interest and motivation at the beginning of the workshops, they become fully engaged with the training. They thoroughly enjoyed designing their puppets and dived into their creative process, and this indeed is a precious and concrete outcome.

A participant in the pilot (65) stated that this activity reminded him **of his childhood, feeling of peace and happiness.** Another participant (22) commented that the workshop helped her **feel more assertive and comfortable.** Indeed, the evaluation results have shown that art is a powerful tool with a broad impact, and it is possible to use it in lifelong learning for everyone.

Photo by Utopia Education and Art

# SECTION 4

## How to Provide Training to Members of Vulnerable Groups who Wish to Become Trainers Themselves

# SECTION 4

## How to Provide Training to Members of Vulnerable Groups who Wish to Become Trainers Themselves

Organising arts and cultural activities can serve as an opportunity to meet individuals from vulnerable groups **with enthusiasm for lifelong learning,** which is essential for becoming a trainer. After the conclusion of the activity, participants might be ready to join a workshop to become trainers themselves if they are interested in taking responsibility and accepting new challenges.

As mentioned before, a face-to-face activity with positive social and emotional outcomes would be more fruitful than an online programme. However, the training can be supported with **online follow-up sessions,** in which the participants can exchange their experiences and ask questions. Moreover, the fact that some of the specific vulnerable target groups might be facing economic difficulties or lack of material/technical equipment (computer and internet) might not allow the sessions to take place online.

As an example, in the case of blind and visually impaired people, training programs focused on using objects for educational and therapeutic purposes might be particularly challenging. As explained above, puppetry art is very much related to visual expression; however, during a face to face training, individuals with visual impairments can master the art of building and animating puppets sufficiently to impart this knowledge and skills to others. They will still need the support of people who can see, who would observe the puppets in action and explain what works on stage while animating puppets; what the audience sees and what is not meaningful, not appropriate in an artistic and technical sense. Their personal experience of experimenting with puppets, understanding the main rules of constructing the figures and bringing them to life is what matters.

The duration of the training program and the particular sessions should be determined based on the technical complexity of the selected cultural tool or methodology and the level of the necessary facilitation skills that trainees should acquire. Extensive training will not be necessary if the participants have already attended arts and cultural training and thus have basic knowledge about structure and content.

However, if the participants just started to learn about a specific field, **they should first experience the methodology themselves.** The main goal is to allow them to explore the effects of the activity, which will help them become more authentic and self-reliant trainers and facilitators later on.

The training for trainers program might focus on the new skills and techniques for a consecutive period, followed by a brief **presentation and analysis of the project toolbox and manual.** It is crucial to mention the importance of group dynamics and giving time for reflection and evaluation. Also, **examples and specifications of vulnerable groups** can be discussed with the participants. In the case of implementing such a program, one full day of the intense workshop might be sufficient.

However, to dig deeper into the technique and go through some social competencies and technical skills, the duration of the training programme might need to be long-term, for example, one day a week with a duration of two hours for one year.

The training aims to help participants develop soft skills such as **communication, empathy,** and **active listening,** as well as their capacity to **create inclusive environments** and succeed in **group and conflict management.** The participants' availability and willingness should also be considered for the program's planning and content. It is crucial to explore the possible limitations of the participants and be flexible in responding to their needs. It should also be noted that the more the participants are trained, the impact of the training will be more substantial and integrated.

The future trainers and facilitators should work on themselves to attain an **open-minded, flexible approach** that would help the participants fully engage in the training process. They should aim to contribute to participants' communication, organisation, adaptability and creative thinking skills. Besides introducing the participants to a new technique, sharing many **energisers, ice-breakers, and team-building games** would be helpful tools for them to use in future. Whether the candidate trainers know each other in advance, it would be beneficial to dedicate some time to team-building activities to **boost the group's cohesion and sense of belonging.**

In this direction, try to limit the number of participants to as few as possible so that everyone would have the opportunity to receive the necessary amount of time and support to grow and empower themselves at a good pace. Ideally, **include as a mentor/trainer someone from the same vulnerable background to serve as a constant positive reinforcement for the trainees.** Also, remember to adjust the training material's content and format to the level and learning pace.

Some specific arts and cultural activities might require methodical use and a detailed explanation for the proper use of materials and tools to obtain better results, such as in making ceramics. For example, working with a group of people with intellectual disabilities can be very challenging to establish a training programme trainers. However, with the help and follow-up of technical staff and a training programme adapted to the group's needs, people with intellectual disabilities can become authentic leaders, spreading their artistic motivation and skills to others.

Furthermore, the **cost of the technique** should be considered ahead, and financial sources could be supported by applying for social funds. For example, developing a ceramic-making workshop or setting up a radio station could be challenging to afford due to the economic cost it requires.

In addition, the use of professional guidance and personal contact with other people, which is provided by the presence of professionals, is essential for their life and inclusion in society. Throughout the whole procedure, the presence of a **psychologist** or a **social worker** is necessary to safeguard the trainees' terms of participation. Again blind and visually impaired people, assisting people who can see will be beneficial during the training. In addition, when working with intellectual disabilities, supporting them with assistants with healthy cognitive skills would be beneficial and help with social interaction during the training.

**Training materials** might remain the same as those in the pilot training, but with an emphasis on a more detailed and creative exploration of them if many participants already have basic knowledge by attending the pilot before. Different materials can spark the participants' creativity, and variety would enable new experiences. It would be practical to **share the experiences** of both trainers and participants about the pilot training and share outputs such as videos and evaluation results. Adding new external resources to the program, such as visiting artists, excursions, exhibitions or arts and crafts schools, is also recommended.

During the training, participants might try to facilitate short sessions of the program as a trial. The other participants and trainers can share their **gentle feedback and support each other** to grow self-esteem. This way, participants can try out their new skills and gain experience leading such training. Ideally, when a participant can organise a program on their own, an experienced trainer can assist them or attend the training with the observer role. Thus, they can receive objective reflections on the program and improve their training skills.

**Monitoring and evaluation** should always be present in such transformative events. At the beginning of the training, there should be a constant assessment of the training process to prevent dropouts or low-quality attendance. Finally, the acquired skills should be assessed at the end of the training process.

Photo by Teatr Grodzki

## CONCLUSION

Lifelong learning programs help adults develop and update their skills and improve adaptability to society. Professional and social life increasingly demands adaptability, critical thinking, problem-solving, curiosity, and creativity are cognitive and socio-behavioural skills. [32] Furthermore, every individual has the right t**o quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.**[33] Millions of people worldwide are excluded from education for reasons such as sex, gender orientation, ethnic or social origin, language, religion, nationality, economic condition or ability.[34]

When it comes to adult education, it is essential to identify all barriers to education and remove them and provide an **"inclusive education"** for all learners, no matter what challenges they may have. They should be able to participate in programs that will be beneficial, effective, and practical for their lives. The success of inclusive education is primarily through the acceptance, understanding and adaptation of the differences and diversity of learners, including their physical, cognitive, academic, social and emotional aspects.

**UNESCO's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,** featuring the **leave no one behind** the principle, envisages peaceful, just and inclusive societies where all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality. This act against inequality aims to eradicate poverty, preserve the planet and achieve sustained economic growth. **An inclusive society** is based on fundamental values of **equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedoms, tolerance and embracing diversity.** [35] A socially cohesive society would support diversity, and all groups would have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, and recognition. **Social cohesion ensures vulnerable groups take active roles in society.**

The **contribution of art and culture to all aspects of social life, including economy and employment,** is continuously growing. Culture impacts the labour market while maintaining its underlying nature related to creativity, identity and self-expression. Such characteristics offer the possibility of combining employability skills with authentic self-expression, well-being and, as a result, the feeling of social inclusion.

[32] World Bank World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work. p. 72-82, available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/816281518818814423/pdf/2019-WDR-Report.pdf /10.08.2022.

[33] https://www.unesco.org/en/education/right-education /16.09.2022.

[34] https://www.unesco.org/en/education/inclusion /11.09.2022.

[35] https://en.unesco.org/culture-development/transversal-approaches/social-inclusion /14.09.2022

As discussed in many studies also mentioned in this manual, arts and cultural activities help people get to know themselves better, define feelings and needs, build self-confidence and boost motivation. These activities also contribute to developing new or improving **soft skills,** maintaining better **resilience** in life experiences and, helping to **overcome past traumas, reducing stress and depression.** Extraordinary changes can be observed among vulnerable groups while participating in these activities, such as **bringing people together;** fostering an **inclusive and creative atmosphere** where all values and principles are respected.

Designing and delivering arts and cultural activities requires that many variables are taken into account, such as: planning the activity, incorporating the needs and interests of the target group, adjusting the duration and format of the activity, assessing the added value of a participatory approach in the development of the activity. In this manual, the Step Up Consortium tried to describe how such activities are effectively organised to approach specific vulnerable groups and also shared essential highlights from pilots in each partnering country. The vulnerable groups that have been mentioned in the manual were:

- Homeless People
- People with Visual Impairments
- Beneficiaries of the Social Integration Income
- Women with & without Disabilities
- People with Mental and Physical Disabilities
- People in Psychiatric Care
- Young Adults with Economic Disadvantages
- Seniors

In every phase of developing and implementing the pilots, the organisers detailly assessed the needs and characteristics of the above-mentioned vulnerable groups. Regardless of the activity type carried out during the training, the evaluation results have shown that artistic expression is a powerful tool with a broad impact on **enhancing individuals' well-being** and **soft skills. Self-confidence, self-expression, teamwork** and the **chance to share emotions and personal stories** were among the gains of the training, according to participants of the Step Up pilot activity in all six countries.[36]

[36] For more and detailed information please see the "Step Up Project Toolbox" which is available at https://stepupart.eu/images/step_up_toolbox.pdf.

Inviting the members of vulnerable groups to become trainers for artistic and cultural activities would serve the sustainability of this project. In this regard, organisers should encourage the beneficiaries of the pilots who are interested in arts-based activities to lead similar non-formal education activities.

Through capacity-building activities, beneficiaries who were once participants become professional trainers by acquiring professional qualifications and significantly contribute to **human capital development.** After inquiring about the needs, difficulties and expectations of interested people, a trainers' training group could be established.

As stated in UNESCO's social inclusion agenda, arts and cultural activities can be very effective tools for expressing emotion, communication, creating friendships and uniting communities around a shared vision of peace.[37]

Focusing on the role of arts in the inclusion of vulnerable groups, arts and cultural activities have **therapeutic and restorative dimensions for vulnerable groups** as they **promote social inclusion** by **supporting social connectedness** and **well-being** instead of solitude and distress.[38] Likewise, artistic expression is fundamental to fostering **social inclusion and stability,** contributing to a more peaceful society and helping to prevent tension and conflict.

[37] https://en.unesco.org/culture-development/transversal-approaches/social-inclusion /13.09.2022

[38] Botton A., Armstrong J. Art as Therapy, Phaidon Press, P:64-65 Oct 14, 2013

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