

CULTURAL PROJECTS FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

POLICY RECOMMENDATION REPORT
BASED ON STEP UP PROJECT FINDINGS



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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CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION

WHY READ THIS REPORT?

Page 1 - 3



CHAPTER 1

THE MAP OF PROBLEMATIC AREAS. URGENT ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Page 4 - 14



CHAPTER 2

TYPES OF CULTURAL PROJECTS. WHAT MATTERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION ?

Page 15 - 23



CHAPTER 3

BEFORE THE PROJECT ENDS. UPSCALING STRATEGIES AND ASSURING A LONG-TERM IMPACT

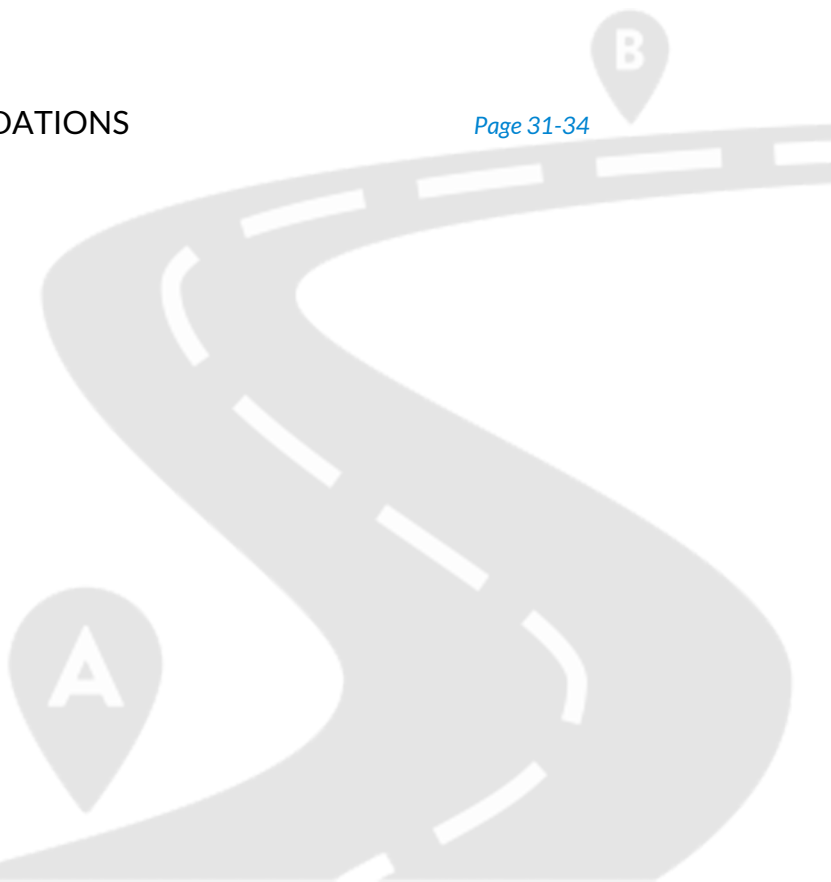
Page 24 -30



SUMMARY

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Page 31-34



INTRODUCTION

WHY READ THIS REPORT?

This publication has been elaborated by six project partners from Greece, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, Poland and Türkiye as part of the Step Up Project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union.

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The Step Up Project aims to establish a new transnational network of adult education providers of informal and non-formal educational activities. The Network members have been working on the promotion of social inclusion of adult learners, especially from vulnerable groups, including people with various disabilities (in particular blind and visually impaired persons), homeless people, refugees, the elderly, people with mental health problems, the impoverished and disadvantaged women.



This publication consists of three parts followed by a list of recommendations. It centres around the concept of social inclusion which can be boosted and considerably supported by diverse culture-based activities.

The urgent need to promote inclusive actions and approaches results predominantly from the fact that certain groups are systematically disadvantaged and/or discriminated against due to different reasons. It is very important to first identify specific needs and constraints of various vulnerable groups along with the shortfalls of the current policies and practices in different European countries in order to be able to find appropriate solutions. This is why the first chapter of the publication outlines some of the factors and mechanisms that perpetuate social exclusion. It points out the disparity between convincingly formulated legal acts and the actual situation of disadvantaged groups. Thus adult and art education, intertwining and complementing each other to great effect, may encompass a wide range of challenges crucial for achieving social inclusion.





The second chapter focuses on the use of art as an especially effective tool in fostering social inclusion. Here, the main emphasis has been placed on reflecting on the whole complexity of socially engaged cultural projects. Recommendations on all the important aspects of planning, implementing and evaluating projects in terms of their usefulness and accessibility are taken into consideration. The examples of particularly valuable and successful initiatives have also been presented in order to inspire and indicate the possible directions for future actions.

The last part of the publication is devoted to efficient ways of maximizing the projects' impact and sustainability of their outputs and results. Good dissemination practices which ensure further application of new methodologies are described and based on specific examples. Various ideas for sharing know-how and approaches that have been elaborated and tested during the projects already implemented are to serve as inspiration for the cultural operators that work with or are willing to support vulnerable groups.

The content presented in all the three chapters reflects the findings of desk research conducted by individual partners and also draws from the experience of twelve focus groups, the project's pilot activity, namely six trainings for trainers organized in the partners' countries. It builds on the resources which contributed to the Step Up Manual, too. Thus, the final list of recommendations that conclude the publication, represents the opinions and expertise of a wide circle of adult education, art and social inclusion practitioners from different European countries.

Moreover, it should be stated that the Step Up project itself can be treated as a good example of a cultural initiative fostering social inclusion. According to the project partners, the most valuable and useful aspects of this undertaking in terms of supporting positive social changes, are the following:



-  A new network of professionals and organizations experienced in working for the public benefit has been constituted. This creates real possibilities for further actions carried out jointly and in collaboration with partners' networks.
-  The good practices chosen for piloting have been tested in different contexts and accordingly adjusted to the needs of various target groups. This allows for application of project methods in the new environments.
-  A number of trainings, hands-on classes and workshops have been organized for a large number of art, education and social work practitioners, providing a solid basis for their further applications and dissemination of the knowledge acquired.
-  Several good practices in relevant fields were gathered, described in seven languages and released in a free electronic version (Toolbox, Manual, Collection of Methods). These materials contribute to the capacity building of educators, artists and trainers from across Europe.

This publication is addressed to policy makers in the area of education, to national, regional and local authorities which are responsible for designing and implementing social inclusion measures and actions, employers and decision makers in the sector of culture and social politics.

Other Step Up educational resources are also available:



TOOLBOX OF GOOD PRACTICES

https://stepupart.eu/images/step_up_toolbox.pdf



MANUAL

https://stepupart.eu/Manual_STEP%20UP.pdf



GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED BY THE GREEK PARTNER

<https://stepupart.eu/images/good-practices-greece.pdf>



GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED BY THE HUNGARIAN PARTNER

<https://stepupart.eu/images/good-practices-hungary-3.pdf>



GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED BY THE POLISH PARTNER

https://stepupart.eu/images/good-practices-poland_eu_countries2.pdf



GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED BY THE PORTUGUESE PARTNER

<https://stepupart.eu/images/good-practices-portugal.pdf>



GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED BY THE SPANISH PARTNER

<https://stepupart.eu/images/good-practices-spain.pdf>



GOOD PRACTICES COLLECTED BY THE TURKISH PARTNER

<https://stepupart.eu/images/good-practices-turkey.pdf>



CHAPTER 1

THE MAP OF PROBLEMATIC AREAS URGENT ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

UNESCO's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development featuring the *leave no one behind* 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 sustainable economic growth. An inclusive society is based on the fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as on the principles of tolerance and diversity. Within a socially cohesive society diversity is highly accepted and all groups have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, and recognition. Social cohesion ensures vulnerable groups take active roles in society, and participate in lifelong learning programmes. The Step Up project contributes to the identification of problems and challenges related to activities for social inclusion.

Below, the relevant actions by individual project partners have been presented, as well as research findings and data collected by them.



According to the National Framework Strategy for Sustainable Development in **Hungary**, vulnerable groups are those who, in terms of their lifestyles, life prospects and quality of life, are unable to change their situation through their own efforts and therefore are at risk of marginalisation. These include, among others, people with low educational attainment, at risk of unemployment or permanently unemployed, those living on low incomes, in disadvantaged areas, people with addictions, disabilities, social behaviour and integration problems, as well as ethnic or cultural minorities. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office data, by 2021, extreme poverty has almost disappeared in Hungary, but the three dimensions of poverty (relative income poverty, very low work intensity and severe material deprivation) continue to affect approximately 2.5 million people. Vulnerable social groups represent nearly one third of the whole population. The phenomenon of social exclusion is generally identified as a "poverty problem". Vulnerable social groups require special attention and targeted action, as they have limited or no effective capacity to adapt to an ever-changing environment.



Targeted populations in Hungary included adults with cognitive disabilities, adults who struggle with mental health problems, and are therefore victims of social exclusion, and young adults in a vulnerable situation regarding their job perspectives.

According to the most comprehensive set of data published by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in 2011, almost 500,000 people with disabilities live in the country. Out of this, approximately 43,000 people are people with intellectual disabilities, more than 46,000 are people with mental health issues and 5,000 with autism. In regards to employment, after comparing the 2001 census data to the 2011 census data there were still three main issues that Hungary needs to address regarding disabled people: high ratio of inactive persons, passivity and isolation.

Research about the mental health of the Hungarian population concluded that “mental health must overcome party politics and become a government priority in Hungary. This is crucial in light of Hungary’s comparatively poor mental health indexes. The programmes need adequate funding for training and research, otherwise the mental well-being of the population will deteriorate further. In addition, there needs to be a willingness to find new and creative ways to strengthen prevention and make treatment more effective.”

Young, low income adults were a specific group in Hungary, where career starter teachers are in a particularly vulnerable situation. Initial teacher’s education cannot meet the demand for teachers: dropout rates are high and less than half of graduate teachers actually enter the profession. The shortage is most significant in disadvantaged areas, for science subjects and foreign languages, and in vocational education and training. Low salaries are one factor – these are equivalent to only 61%-70% of the salaries of other tertiary graduates (OECD, 2019).

Resilience, adaptability, self-motivation and authenticity are key to the individual’s employability and sense of entrepreneurship and the lack of programmes that cultivate the aforementioned values contributes to maintaining an unequal status quo among the various segments of society, impacting negatively those who are already in vulnerable positions. As described in the Step Up Toolbox and Manual, all vulnerable groups involved were positively impacted; individuals developed self-confidence, group members were proactive in the creative processes, and all participants felt the sense of belonging and gained an experience of success in the process. As a result of the Puppetry process newly qualified teachers and adults with mental health problems were able to successfully define learning outcomes for themselves.



Non-formal education methods are underrepresented in education programmes for adults, and are mostly available in the bigger cities, to which many people who could benefit from these programmes don't have access. "In some cases, there is uneven coverage of training provision throughout a country. Issues of rural isolation, transport and accessibility play a part in this and location of provision becomes a key concern." (EEPO report)

The Hungarian partner, NyitottKör supported the mapping of already existing initiatives and facilitated networking among active practitioners of ALE (Active Learning Education) programmes for soft skills development, implementing cultural activities. They piloted Art-Education activities that were free of charge, went directly to the target groups' venue and community, and primarily impacted development of soft-skills according to the feedback of participants.



The situation of disadvantaged groups in **Poland** has been definitely improving since the political transformations after 1989 when the civil society building process was initiated and activities of independent non-governmental organizations started. This has contributed first of all to changes in the perception of people with disabilities. Moreover, public awareness has undoubtedly increased, which resulted in breaking, to some extent, long-lived stereotypes.

An important milestone in further positive changes was the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006 (in 2012 in Poland). According to this document, all Signatory States are obliged to ensure the equal exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all disadvantaged persons. Polish legislation indeed ensures the vast majority of rights enshrined in the Convention. However, real-life practice significantly differs from model theories.

The conclusions from many research projects carried out in recent years indicate low effectiveness of activities undertaken to improve the social situation and persistent social exclusion of a large number of disabled people. In reality, people with various disabilities and those who have problems with social adaptation due to other reasons, still face obstacles and difficulties in daily life.



The following are the most relevant issues worth mentioning:

- **Architectural barriers.** Even though the elimination of architectural barriers is one of the basic solutions used in Poland to allow people with disabilities free and safe movement in an urbanized space, they still encounter serious problems with mobility. Polish standards for public space adaptation to the needs of visually impaired people and ways of eliminating the barriers still remain a challenge.
- **Lack of sufficient understanding and knowledge about needs of people with disabilities.** Architectural barriers are easier to be removed as opposed to social barriers. Despite some positive changes in public opinion after 1989, a number of prejudices and fear of otherness persist, as practice shows.
- **Access to the labour market.** In Poland, according to data from the Central Statistical Office for 2009, only 17% of people with visual disabilities work. 35% of blind people have never worked. At the same time, vision impairment is the fourth cause of disability in Poland. The idea of lifelong learning in the case of blind people is also very poorly developed in Poland. The analyses carried out by the EBU (Board of the European Blind Union) as part of the "Hidden majority" report in 2011 show that only 0.5% of blind people engage in adult education activities (and for the disabled in general, the rate is 5%). It can be concluded that, having reached adulthood, blind and visually impaired people do not undertake any studies or courses.




These areas of actual and potential exclusion come to the foreground and call for intervention. The decline in interest in participating in institutional culture is noticeable and confirmed in the studies. Many of the public cultural institutions are closed off to both their audience and creators, deprived of creative potential and uncritical of their own actions. Even though a number of creative projects consider participation of disadvantaged groups, a lot of them, in fact, consolidate the division into the non-disabled and disabled. For instance, theatre for the blind or hard of hearing only is a general trend. A truly inclusive approach in planning and implementing cultural initiatives is rare. It requires specific competencies and training of the educators, as well as the willingness to overcome communication barriers among those involved in the creation process.





In **Spain**, since its incorporation into the European Union in 1986, educational policies have gained a broader perspective. One of the most important events in adult education was the publication of the 1986 White Paper on Adult Education which follows the models and principles given by UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

The main objective was to avoid educational inequalities and to improve the quality of education in the following three dimensions, all of which from a perspective of lifelong and comprehensive education:

-  Basic education
-  Occupational training
-  Training for personal and social development

Since the adult education system in Spain is decentralised, each region develops non-formal educational learning programmes through the Regional Ministries of Education and Employment, Local Corporations, either directly or through Municipalities, as well as Non-Governmental Organisations. Due to its political and territorial configuration, there is also the need to strengthen the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of the 17 autonomous communities and two autonomous cities: Ceuta and Melilla.

Despite efforts in educational policies and changes in educational laws to promote adult training, according to the Labour Force Survey (2007), there are more than 13 million adults (35.3 %) who do not have a basic compulsory education qualification, and more than 13 million workers (59.4 %) who have not received specific preparation for a job.

The accreditation of professional competences is a way to compensate for this inequality by obtaining an official qualification through the accreditation of work experience or through non-formal training.

In Spain, unemployment is still a major challenge, especially among young people. The European Statistical Office reveals that 29.6% of young people under the age of 25 are unemployed in Spain, the worst figure of the 30 countries that are included in the list. In this context, in order to improve training and socio-occupational integration, there are second chance schools for young people from 15 to 29 years old, where, in addition to technical skills, they work on the transversal skills (values, behaviour, attitudes) necessary for their adequate integration in socio-professional environments.



It is clear that in recent decades there has been willingness on the part of public administrations to improve and offer a wide range of possibilities in lifelong learning. However, we must consider greater participation in adult training programmes and more integrated action between formal and non-formal systems in order to reach sections of the population with low or no qualifications.

On the other hand, the model of adult education is linked to the economic growth of the country and to the demands of global competitiveness. To this end, technical and individual competences and a hierarchical model of education are promoted, according to which people become objects of instruction rather than subjects of their training process and integral development.



The role of lifelong learning in social life has also been recognized in **Türkiye**, where the governments, both central and local, have started to attach much more importance to adult education.

In 1996, Istanbul Municipality started to provide free art and vocational training to Istanbul residents with Istanbul Vocational Training Courses (İSMEK). It has also come to the forefront as a socialisation centre due to its unique structure and has turned into an area where especially housewives and the elderly can spend time.

Apart from İSMEK, notably the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, metropolitan municipalities and district municipalities, the Employment Agency, and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Support Department (KOSGEB) are among the institutions which support lifelong learning programs.

One of the most important problems of adult individuals today is unemployment. Therefore, vocational courses have the potential to make a very important contribution to employability for citizens, as centres provide the tools to learn and develop vocational knowledge.

Additionally, vocational courses can strengthen participation in life in different fields promoting fair opportunities to young people, adults, people with disabilities, elderly people, in short, everyone across societal levels.

Türkiye's participation rate in Adult Education is far from the average of both OECD countries and EU countries. In October 2019, a study was initiated in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the



General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, which draws attention to the importance of the issue in terms of Syrian refugees, and the “Turkish Language Trainings for Adults” project was implemented with the aim of providing Turkish language skills to 52,000 Syrian adults. Similar projects are needed in general for individuals with refugee status or individuals who belong to different vulnerable groups in Türkiye.



Similarly to Poland and Spain, the admission of **Portugal** to the EEC, now the EU, in 1986, has largely contributed to significant changes in the adult education sector. In Portugal, adult education, like education in general, has been determined by a multiplicity of internal factors (the sector's dynamics) and external ones (political, social, economic, and cultural contexts), and is therefore very much shaped by historical circumstances. The policy guidelines on education and training of the European Union, as well as UNESCO and OECD, have had a considerable impact on the Portuguese national plan, in particular from the year 2000.

Overall, the last decades have been marked by a significant effort to improve the qualifications of the Portuguese population, coming as a response to a historical weakness in this area and an attempt to fill the gap between European and Portuguese standards, in a country that had and still has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the EU.

As far as adult education is concerned, the focus has been on the Recognition, Validation, and Certification of Competencies (RVCC) acquired in formal and vocational contexts. This focus aims at the development of the ability to build individual learning pathways that value each person's achievements, promoting flexible education models and giving greater relevance to on-the-job training.

One of the Portuguese government's priorities is to revitalize adult education and training as the cornerstone of the qualifications system, ensuring the continuity of lifelong learning policies and the permanent improvement of learning processes and outcomes. To that end, in 2005, the government presented the *Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades* (New Opportunities Initiative), whose main objective was to overcome the structural deficit of qualifications by making general schooling available to the population. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in Adult Education and Training Courses - EFA Courses, thus expanding the network of RVCC centres, named New Opportunities Centres (CNO). In 2013, by government decision, the CNO closed, and in their place were created the Centres for



Qualification and Professional Education (CQEP), which became the new structures for strengthening the component of lifelong and youth guidance, along with the interventions for adults.

In 2016, the *Qualifica* (Qualifying) Program was implemented, which replaced the CQEF, and whose main objective is to improve the qualification of adults, contributing significantly to the improvement of the qualification and employability levels of the population in general. One of the program's main goals was to achieve, by 2020, a 15% rate of adult participation in lifelong learning activities and to increase this to 25% by 2025. To be pointed out, and according to *PORDATA (2019)*, 47.8% of the population aged 25 to 64 have qualifications below secondary education, so the *Qualifica* Program aims to mobilize the adult population to improve their qualifications, bringing Portugal closer to the EU average.

Although formal adult education and training have in recent decades achieved considerable development, underpinned by lifelong learning, this is not the case for non-formal and informal education. Notwithstanding the Council Recommendation of December 20, 2012, that invites Member States to establish, by 2018, national dispositions for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (identification, documentation, assessment, and certification), in Portugal legislation in this field remains considerably minimal compared to formal education.

Adult education, non-formal and informal, has deserved greater recognition and investment from private sector organizations, based on their social responsibility policies. There fore, these organizations are the major investors in this adult education field, providing funds for financing various cultural projects designed for the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups. However, it is important to highlight the role of the municipal public sector that, in compliance with its social responsibility and the principle of subsidiarity, has contributed directly (project financing) and indirectly (providing venues, and transportation) to the development of community intervention projects.

However, on the whole, it can be said that neither the public policies undertaken by the political authorities in the field of adult education nor the action of the various social and educational players involved have been sufficient or even the necessary one to achieve the consolidation of the adult education sector as a specific and autonomous field of education in Portugal [...] (Moreira, 2020, in *Percursos e Tendências da Educação de Adultos em Portugal (1820-1995) - Um Olhar Transversal*)









In **Greece**, over the last decades, several strategies and policies have been implemented in order to promote the social inclusion of various vulnerable groups, while emphasis has also been given on the increase of adults who participate in lifelong learning programmes. Most recently, in 2022, the National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction has been adopted by the government which aims at ensuring the access of vulnerable groups to adequate resources and services; promoting the participation into the labour market; and improving the governance of the strategy. In relation to the promotion of participation into the labour market, the strategy makes specific reference to improving the access of vulnerable unemployed groups to non-formal education and informal learning programs and in particular to second chance schools, vocational training institutes, distance Greek language learning programmes for foreigners, etc.

In addition, the Action Plan for the European Agenda for Adult Learning 2020-2021 aimed to increase participation of adults in Adult Education programs through the provision of a Greek language education program and Elements of Greek Culture to immigrants and to improve the quality of education in Second Chance Schools.

Overall, the learning activities, in the context of the general adult education, address adults that seek to:

-  Enrich their knowledge,
-  Develop abilities and skills,
-  Grow their personality,
-  Develop active citizenship.

However, despite the efforts made thus far, the situation remains challenging. The lack of reliable recent data on the population of vulnerable adults in Greece, along with the fact that they comprise a social group that is far from homogenous and monolithic, and, thus, hard to define, render the task even harder. All the vulnerable groups are still prone to stigma, prejudice, abuse and violence, unemployment, unequal pay, poverty, discrimination and exclusion. Nevertheless, there are also important differences in terms of the challenges they are faced with, which must be carefully thought out for the design and implementation of programs.

For instance, people with disabilities face severe accessibility issues, in both public and private places. As a result, their mobility is constrained, as moving around becomes a matter of safety. By extent, people with disabilities are not only







physically constrained but also excluded in terms of experiences and opportunities that people without disabilities are certain to enjoy. What is more, this particular group is bound to cope with educational and workplace limitations, as special schools in Greece are few, poorly-equipped and segregated from the “mainstream” educational sector.

Impoverished people must, first and foremost, resolve meeting their basic needs, such as insufficient clothing and food. On top of that, they are often plagued by illiteracy. Thus, it should be noted that poverty is a cross-sectoral problem which creates a vicious cycle; the impoverished are trying so hard to make ends meet that their day-to-day survival becomes their only priority, obscuring any further opportunity for personal development.

When it comes to refugees, it is highly probable that, once they arrive at a country, they would face severe housing problems, while they are compelled to surmount additional obstacles due to the fact that they do not usually speak the local language. Therefore, although these people might have been highly educated and generally well-off in their home country, they are forced to start from zero and develop new qualifications and skills in order to accelerate their socio-economic integration into the new environment.

Homeless people, on the other hand, are systematically excluded from many of the facets of the social, political and economic life, and are usually left out of mainstream education. Therefore, in order to achieve their social inclusion it is necessary that they should be receiving some form of education, whether formal, non-formal or informal. Within that context, research suggests that art components are often deemed more suitable to cater to their specific needs and, ultimately, lead to their integration.

On that end, it is evident that whilst there has been improvement, regarding inclusive education policymaking in Greece, there still lays a significant gap between policymaking and implementation. In addition to this, there is no coherent national policy that targets all four components the STEP UP program is about:

-  vulnerable adults
-  non-formal and informal education
-  social inclusion
-  use of art practices



And while there has been policy development as far as the education of certain target groups, e.g. adults with disabilities and/ or mental health problems, there has been serious neglect regarding others, e.g. adults facing homelessness.

Bearing the aforementioned concerns in mind, Greek national policies, in the area of adult education, while fully aligned with policies made on an international and European level, are still far from meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.



All the above-mentioned problematic issues and deficiencies in the European campaign for combating social exclusion form a complex picture. That clearly shows the discrepancy between policies, declarations, official acts and real situation of vulnerable groups. Despite all of the measures already taken and planned for the near future, there is an urgent need to promote social inclusion of the most disadvantaged as one of the basic human values. The contribution of the Step Up project to highlighting the essential role of education, that uses art and culture as a tool, is presented in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 2

TYPES OF CULTURAL PROJECTS

WHAT MATTERS TO SOCIAL INCLUSION ?

In order to increase the commitment and quality of social inclusion projects an analysis of the specific needs of each vulnerable group and its context is necessary. To this end, the creation of alliances between organizations and professionals with extensive experience in direct attention to each vulnerable group is essential.

On the other hand, it is the approach and methodology in the organization of non-formal education activities and the use of art for social inclusion that allows flexible and dynamic, person-centred actions to have a greater positive impact on the participants.

Lifelong learning is not limited to schools but can take place at home, at work and in all areas of life. The learning process should continue without any obstacles, regardless of age, social, and economic status and education level. The concept of lifelong learning has emerged in line with the needs of our day, in order to keep up with rapidly developing and changing social and cultural life. In addition, it has become an important indicator in terms of education level and employment conditions in developed and developing countries.

In all of Europe, strategies and public policies in the adult education sector highlight lifelong learning and adult training as the key to promoting social inclusion. However, it is not often possible to get the most vulnerable adults (the less educated, the economically disadvantaged, the homeless, people with disabilities and mental illnesses, migrants and refugees as well as victims of domestic violence, who are currently the most socially and educationally fragile) to return to education, in particular formal education. This is where non-formal and informal education could contribute in a constructive, integrative, and socially inclusive way.

Social inclusion must be understood from a holistic point of view, and should not only focus on professional but also socio-emotional view of the disadvantaged population. In this sense, community intervention projects have played an extremely relevant role in social inclusion of these people, especially the ones that implement artistic and cultural activities, using art as a tool to enable individuals, help them to rebuild their "I" and empower them.

Another very important condition for success in fostering social inclusion is the accessibility of methods used in cultural projects dedicated to vulnerable groups.



This can be explained by referring to the concept of Universal Design which is not merely a new design trend. In this case it is an orientation to any cultural project that considers every user's needs. Universal Design is a process which is not assumed or expected to bring about a one hundred percent universal solution. The actual availability of a project means that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, ability or disability. It should be designed to meet the needs of those who wish to participate in or could benefit from it. The examples of initiatives undertaken in partner countries, presented at the end of this chapter, show practical aspects of such an inclusive approach. During the designing stage of a programme it is also essential to assess the social context in which the project is to be held. This ensures engagement and increases the willingness in people to do and initiate something, to be more open.

Using arts to reach the sense of “belonging” is highly effective, due to its expressive and creative qualities. Different artistic tools can ensure a safe and empowering setting for people to share their thoughts, their needs and to explore them with each other and with skilled professionals who can support the groups to plan next steps. Having this stability and security promotes the feeling of freedom and expressiveness.

Adaptability is also a key component in any beneficial program. Offering group members freedom of choice leads to the changeability of the process, which ensures participation amongst the concerned. Having the possibility to creatively “experiment” with innovative approaches can lead to new outcomes and it contributes to a more successful program. Nevertheless, it is also practical to use already known approaches and tools, which are proven to be functional and useful. A good example of such an approach comes from the Hungarian partner of the Step Up project. Before the implementation phase, the trainers of Nyitott Kör attended the chosen method themselves – puppetry in adult education – introduced by the Polish partner, Teatr Grodzki. They experienced and learnt the structure and the basics of the method. The trainers' team then adapted the method to specific target groups, taking into account social situations and needs in Hungary. Exploring these adaptations, the team tried to infuse new approaches to the chosen good practice.

Creating safe spaces, actively listening to each other, exploring the needs and skills of the participants – and also the facilitators – can be a challenging task when the group consists of members with very different abilities and needs. At the same time inviting diversity can have huge benefits on the quality of the project and the learning outcomes for participants. Creating partnerships among organizations with different profiles but similar missions adds new dimensions to a (cultural) project, because it increases motivation, professionalism, development and new ideas.



In the implementation phase, the theory of the project design comes into practice. It is crucial in this phase to use the project's resources accordingly: professional information and materials, findings about social situations and possibilities, competent, qualified and interested staff and organization, and also different funds a project can provide. All of these aspects strengthen the practical dimension of the implementation phase.

The Step Up Project tries to maximize the above mentioned aspects, in order to raise the benefits of its joint assets. During the implementation of the project, it became clear that there is a gap between professionals working in this field, and also between professionals and the target groups. Thus, a well functioning social project requires good infrastructure and a platform, where professionals can have an open discussion about socio-political issues and share their working methods.

Putting culture and education together has become an increasingly common and necessary claim. Through culture, and different artistic activities and methods, it is possible to contribute to and promote quality education for all people. There are multiple research studies that demonstrate the benefits of incorporating arts and culture into adult education methodology. The development of a more critical thinking, or favouring more creative or innovative ways of solving problems are some of the benefits of adopting a more artistic vision.

The results of the reports created in the Step Up Network show that cultural activity fits in with all the objectives linked to the creation of more sustainable and inclusive societies: innovation, social cohesion, resilience, participation and self-motivation, which are drivers of change and essential for a sustainable culture.

With regards to the typology of cultural projects that contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable adults through education, various criteria can be used for their categorization. One way to classify such projects could be by the type of art they use as an educational medium.

An additional way to categorize cultural projects could be by using types art educators borrow from the field of psychology and social sciences. These include the categorization to field-dependent and field-independent projects. Along these lines, the typology of emotionally-disturbed and "normal" has been the product of research conducted by Golomb, which again refers to the psychological status of trainers and participants. Another criterion, derived from sociological studies, is aesthetics. Last, but not least, gender has also been used to define different types of cultural projects.

Thus, it is counter-argued that observations from the field of art education can lead to more relevant categorizations, for example a typology that is based on school art vis-à-vis academic art. By extent, a distinction can be drawn between projects that focus on art in formal versus non-formal or informal education.



The importance of adopting a practical, realistic approach rather than a theoretical one towards projects that use art as educational means to ultimately achieve social inclusion should be stressed.

While typologies can be used as guidelines for the design and implementation of projects, oftentimes they turn out to be severely limiting. It is very seldom that an impactful project would fall under one specific category. Consequently, while it is suggested that typologies can provide direction, a “one-size-fit all” approach could prove to be harmful to other characteristics, such as innovation and adaptability. Practice has also indicated that cultural projects further differ by geography, which could relate to ethnic preconditions, and means available (e.g. funds, materials used in art production).

STEP UP, specifically, can be roughly categorized by taking the following two parameters into account: artistic medium and target group. Following a slightly differentiated approach, all STEP UP partners selected a range of artistic practices, which they then used throughout pilot sessions. During the process, they assumed that each practice would be suitable for meeting the needs of each of the target groups, and tested their original hypothesis against this assumption. Based on this, Equal Society opted for radio as a means of empowerment of the homeless. Teatr Grodzki, NyitottKör, Utopia Education and Art, and Centro Social de Soutelo chose puppetry to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities, the elderly, adults in psychiatric care and young adults with low income, respectively. Finally, Espacio Rojo implemented ceramics activities, aiming at the inclusion of women with and without disabilities and migrants.

Upon implementation, partners have reached the conclusion that these selected practices had been indeed beneficial to the respective groups. To be more precise, it was observed that after the activities, participants had built on their teamwork and communication skills, as well as their creativity and were ultimately more confident and assured, in spite of the hardships they were going through.



As a result of setting and conducting focus groups and running trainings and workshops for trainers and educators in all the partner countries, numerous best practices in the field of art and education have been collected, as part of the Step Up project. Some of the examples which cover various vulnerable groups and exploit different artistic tools are as follows:



ARTS-BASED PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICES IN SPAIN

The project **HILODOBLE** (hilodoble.com) is one good practice which has been the product of the alliance of two entities (AIDEI, a company promoted by the Arrabal-AID Association, and ASIMAS, both located in the province of Malaga), resulting in the labour insertion of vulnerable groups, environmental sustainability and cultural practice.

Another entity that deserves to be highlighted for the interesting methodology it is using in the field of theatre is **Teatro del Oprimido y las Oprimidas**. It conducts aesthetic and political research which seeks to ensure the inclusion of the social structure both in the staging and in the dialogue with the audience. In their projects they involve several community agents in different areas (disability, mental health, gender diversity, etc.) and their activities' results are shared with the wider society through public festivals.

ONCE (fundaciononce.es) Foundation is a pioneer organization in the cooperation and solidarity of the Spanish blind towards other groups of people with disabilities to improve their living conditions.

The Biennial of Contemporary Art is a project whose primary objective is to recognize and disseminate the work of artists with disabilities or those who find their inspiration in disability. ([The Biennial of Contemporary Art](#))

The mission is to achieve ACCESSIBILITY and INCLUSION. Accessibility in the meaning of, on the one hand, accessible culture for all, working from different fields of action, and on the other hand, being able to enjoy culture under equal conditions. Inclusion means access for artists with disabilities to the art market, resulting in their social inclusion and labour insertion. The professional projection and scope of this initiative in society is also useful for raising awareness regarding the elimination of prejudices towards artistic creation by people with disabilities.

Regarding music as a cultural, artistic tool, the musical-social program of the **Dalanota** Association, based in Madrid, is also worth mentioning. Although the program mainly aims at children and adolescents, adults also participate in it. What is also interesting is the network they form with other entities such as Red de música social and Musicop (musicop.cat) in the city of Barcelona.

Dan Zass is an association formed by a group of professionals in performing arts, special and social education, which carries out dance activities mostly for people with functional diversity, although non-diverse people can also take part. In addition to these activities, it organises stage productions during festivals, with a view to drawing public attention to the activity of people with disabilities.



ARTS-BASED PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICES IN GREECE

The Panhellenic Association of Parents, Guardians and Friends of Multiply Disabled Visually Impaired People “Amimoni” has successfully implemented music therapy activities, targeting multiply disabled adults. To this end, a music group of three was created, named “Oneiremata”. Apart from music therapy sessions per se, the group has taken part in several concerts in collaboration with renowned Greek artists.

Another effective intervention, which utilizes art practice as an educational tool for inclusion purposes, has been the theatrical group of the Association of People with Disabilities and friends of Rodopi Prefecture “Perpato”. In this case, albeit beneficiaries fall under the same category, drama therapy is the preferred practice for their integration; in short, more than one art practices can work well for the same target group.

The Greek NGO KETHEA Diavasi deploys crafts and ceramics for the (re)integration of adults that have been former drug addicts. The organization has, so far, witnessed a positive correlation between participation in such activities and the amelioration of the participants’ soft and social skills, which are much needed in today’s workplace.

ARTS-BASED PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICES IN PORTUGAL

The community intervention projects, such as **Ópera na Prisão** (Opera at the Prison) – Sociedade Artística Musical de Pousos, Reshape Ceramics - APPAC (currently **RESHAPE**), and **Corpo em Cadeia** (Body in Prison), by the Olga Roriz Company, are held in prison. During workshops participants enhance their creativity, motivation, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and communication. It should be noted that Ópera na Prisão and Reshape Ceramics have also capacitated some of their participants to assume a monitoring role themselves and develop workshops for their peers.

The **TUM TUM TUM** and the **(Re) Veste** projects are intended for young adults with disabilities and mental illness. TUM TUM TUM organizes music workshops, during which formal and informal musical instruments are explored, and the participants do not need to have any musical ability to join the activities. The groups are trained to subsequently make public performances, which serve to disseminate the project and alert civil society to the issue of social and labour inclusion of these young people. During workshops, they work on socio-emotional skills that allow them to improve their self-esteem, stimulate their creativity and capacity of expression, as well as their socialization.

As for (Re) Veste, the project focuses on customizing second-hand clothes, respecting the environment, circular economy, reuse, and inclusion. They work in partnership with the Forensic Psychiatric Unit of the Magalhães Lemos Hospital, the Social Security Areosa Rehabilitation Centre, the RSI Measure team, the Incorpora Programme (in view of their labour insertion). They now intend to create the (Re) Veste clothing brand by opening an online store where they can sell their products, ensuring economic sustainability of the project.



ARTS-BASED PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICES IN POLAND

The Creation of Sensory Books Project was organized in the Municipal Public Library in Zdunska Wola (central Poland) which, in addition to its principal mission, runs a wide, creative and educational program for different target groups. A group of visually impaired people were taught how to make a unique book, using items that they had at their disposal. Such books incorporate not only pictures and words, but also different textures, sounds, and even smells to tell a story. The participants work on a well-known fable (Little Red Riding Hood, for instance) or choose (invent) their own story to be presented in a new way.

Sometimes they are given a set of meaningful words (names of different emotions, for example), each of which gives inspiration for creating one page of the sensory book. A variety of materials can be used, including cardboard and felt for making pages, plus different types of fabric, foil, feathers, pasta, cotton balls, gravel, buttons to create images replacing the text. Glue, staples and sticking tape are also needed. The same workshop was also offered to other groups of participants, including children, young people and teachers. Such sensory books drum up interest and excitement in reading in general, they also offer people of all ages the opportunity to engage with books in a whole different way. The process of making them is very pleasant, it develops imagination and gives a lot of satisfaction. [Zduńska Wola](#)

Krakov's Botanical Garden in a Version for the Blind, on the other hand, allows the blind to experience, to a much greater extent, the attractions of the Krakow's Botanical Garden (founded in 1783, preserved unchanged since the 19th century). The project by Dr. Lech Kolasiński from the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow included several activities. Ten porcelain tablets (drawings of plants, their leaves, or trunk cross-sections) were placed around the Garden. Those tactile graphics can be touched and examined using a special application. A mobile application for multimedia devices was designed, developed and implemented. Interactive, talking, convex plans of the Botanical Garden and one of the greenhouses were installed at the spot. All this aim to make the blind feel a visit to the garden more fully. At the same time, the experience of studying tyflographics by those who can see is a very special lesson and helps better understand the needs and difficulties faced by the blind.

Even though the above-described projects were created first of all for blind and visually impaired people, they proved to be interesting and useful also for other vulnerable groups and for the public in general. Thus, they prove to be a valuable educational opportunity for all.



ARTS-BASED PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICES IN HUNGARY

ReTextil (Pécs, Hungary) uses a practice-oriented method to explore the mental needs and wellbeing of its participants through recycling used clothes. Besides the spiritual side of this practice – creating a feeling of connectedness, gaining confidence and being empowered – there is also a material one; they manufacture products they can then sell.

Another project called Szuno also combines practical manufacturing with emotional benefits. The focus of their practice is underprivileged mothers who needlework their kids' drawings into items for sale.

Szudky Osayma's individual dance uses a different method which concentrates on physical and mental wellbeing. The centre of this method is mainly experience and its impact, not manufacturing.

An interesting, resourceful initiative tried out during the Step Up project's last phase, was the organization of an inclusive, mixed-group training (involving people with physical or mental disabilities and neurotypical people – all interested in social inclusion and arts), with the use of puppetry art. According to the feedback from the participants, the core power of the training was the group and its dynamic, doing something in a highly inclusive way. Since 2005 this approach has also been present in the **MáSzínház** theatre, where adults with cognitive disabilities have come together to play, facilitated by neurotypical professionals. In 2014 the organization decided to create projects where people with cognitive disabilities and neurotypical participants are equally present, appreciated and together form crucial part of the plays. In these processes participants learn to connect to each other, take everybody's needs into consideration, ask for help and support each other.

ARTS-BASED PROJECTS – GOOD PRACTICES IN TÜRKIYE

The Gerontology Atlas of Türkiye (**GeroAtlas**) research, which has been carried out since 2000 and expected to be completed in 2023 by Prof. Dr İsmail Tufan, aims to determine the measures to increase the ratio of successful and healthy people in the ageing society. For this purpose and based on the data from the GeroAtlas research "The 60+ Refresher University", a non-profit project under the leadership of Akdeniz University Gerontology Department, was created.

The Refresher University aims to use artistic and cultural subjects such as painting, ceramics, sculpting, handcrafts, music, singing, drama, folk dancing etc., as a tool to improve the emotional and cognitive well-being of seniors. The program also provides many self-development options for seniors such as needlework, knitting, repair skills, along with sports, basic healthcare and philosophy. The Refresher University, which started its educational activity within Antalya Akdeniz University in 2016, had 350 students in the first registration period.










It expanded in a short time due to the interest it received throughout Türkiye. On all campuses, host universities run the program free of charge and the lecturers also offer their contributions on a voluntary basis . The program aims to ensure the preservation of knowledge, skills and abilities while supporting the acquisition of new ones in old age. When attending university together with seniors, the younger generations have a chance to benefit from their experiences.

izmir Playback Theater Ensembles use Playback theatre as a tool for awareness and empowerment workshops with vulnerable groups such as refugees, mothers of children with special needs, and female activists. Playback theatre was used as the basic method in most of these workshops. In addition, creative drama, movement and dance techniques were also used. Participants were given the opportunity to connect with their emotions and physical sensations. Following the warm-up exercises, the participants told each other their own personal stories and afterwards, they performed each other's stories with playback theatre techniques.

Most of these workshops were carried out and financed in cooperation with izmir Metropolitan Municipality Disability Services Directorate in İzmir, Türkiye. The participants of these workshops reported back that these playback theatre practices and performances made high contributions to their well-being and self-confidence. They stated that they have enjoyed activities a lot and the techniques helped them to reconnect with their emotions and thoughts, to develop a deeper understanding towards their environment. Moreover, they have felt stronger, improved their ability to deal with difficult situations and end up with a more positive state of mind."

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CHAPTER 3

BEFORE THE PROJECT ENDS : UPSCALLING STRATEGIES AND ASSURING A LONG-TERM IMPACT

The UNESCO report “Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good”, published in 2015, speaks of the need to incorporate more holistic assessment frameworks in education, including social and emotional learning, culture and the arts. However, one of the most challenging tasks faced by the educators who design and implement arts-based projects for vulnerable adults is to guarantee their sustainability.

In order to maximize the impact of a project and ensure long-lasting results, upscaling strategies must be adopted early on in the conception phase. According to Koorts et al. (2021) “A realist perspective assumes that an intervention may lead to different outcomes in different contexts due to different mechanisms. This leads to ‘Context–Mechanism–Outcome’ (CMO) configurations, which are essentially a hypothesis about how an intervention works in a particular context”. By extent, this leads to hypotheses about how a certain intervention might work in similar environments.

Bearing that in mind, scale-up efforts should be proportionate to the complexity of the project and consistent with its nature and goals. Scaling up can be either horizontal or vertical and can encompass different aspects of a project, such as: its geography, number of beneficiaries, scope of action, etc. For instance, a project that is running in Spain can also upscale by transferring its implementation to France; or a project that has first aimed to combat homelessness can diversify its scope to further cope with poverty and unemployment as well, as they are separate, yet interconnected problems.

In all countries in the European Union there are national policies, programs, strategies and research reports that set the directions for the development of Adult Education, addressing also the use of arts and culture, and touching upon the social inclusion problems. One of the examples is the study of Türkiye's adult education policies, carried out by Engin Dilbaz, which aims at putting forward the proposal of a conceptual model. According to the study, the following are some practical recommendations for Adult Education in Türkiye relevant to this Report.

- Studies should be carried out to increase the qualifications of trainers working in adult education in the context of adult learning, principles, methods and techniques.
- Effective and sustainable models should be implemented to transform the human capital raised through adult education into employment.



- In Adult Education, new values of the 21st century such as leadership, entrepreneurship, taking initiative, creative thinking and learning to learn should be prioritized and individuals should be supported to adapt to global transformations and changes.
- Mobile education opportunities should be used to reduce access problems.
- Incentive and support systems should be created to reduce participation problems.
- Measures should be taken to reduce access and participation problems of disadvantaged individuals.
- Adult education activities should be promoted and dissemination activities should be carried out to increase the awareness of the institutions providing this education. In this context, cooperation should be made with local governments, national and local written and visual media, institutions and organizations as well as social media.
- All courses in adult education institutions, regardless of type, should be free of charge.
- E-learning opportunities should be initiated and the contents should be prepared and presented to users with open access over a digital platform.
- Studies should be carried out to ensure the integration of new approaches and technologies in teaching methods and techniques.
- On-the-job training practices should be expanded.

Apart from all the justified assumptions and directives presented above, the reality of projects, especially arts-based and cultural initiatives is far from satisfactory. Most of them have uneven duration and funding amounts, depending on the mode of funding and the project's purpose. According to professionals carrying out social projects with vulnerable groups, the time given is definitely insufficient to bring about an effective individual and social impact.

Initially, participants put up some resistance, show little commitment and responsibility, which is most often caused by basic subsistence issues, mainly economic. For this situation to be reversed, time is needed. Time that allows them to take over the ownership of the project, to feel integrated, and only after reaching this level of stability and trust will they feel able to acknowledge and welcome all the good that the project has to offer. Therefore, the duration of the project is, without a doubt, one of the biggest constraints.

Together with the project's time limitation, comes its limited funding for the project's execution. Therefore, it is very important to be aware that a more stable financing mechanism for social projects is needed, as a guarantee of full social protection, bringing higher quality and stability to both participants and professionals.



In that sense, many of these projects, carrying out artistic and cultural activities with vulnerable populations, would need to be recognized for their role in adult education, through the validation and certification of non-professional skills. If these projects could be included within the national educational systems, from a non-formal education perspective, this would contribute to the recognition and appreciation of the professionals' role, as well as ensure greater stability for the participants of these projects.

However, a number of significant examples of solutions proposed to minimize funding difficulties can be given. For instance, some projects have been transformed into Social Businesses, thus ensuring their autonomy from external funding and allowing the continuity of the projects, and making them self-sustainable.

An example is a Portuguese initiative Reshape Ceramics, by APPAC (Association of Protection and Support Condemned <https://www.reshapeceramics.com/>), which has evolved from a social intervention project, in a prison context, and which has recently become a Social Business, producing ceramics pieces, initially sold through an online store. With online sales continued, a traditional store is planned, where the products manufactured in prison workshops will be sold. It is worth mentioning that, besides being a successful case in terms of social inclusion, it was also a success in terms of employability, since it allowed some of its participants, now former inmates, to find jobs soon after they had left prison.

Evidence-based research on the impact of cultural activities in this matter is important for further fundraising of such projects. The need for more research in the ALE field (Active Learning Education), also including the benefits of soft skills development through artistic activities, possibly involving Higher Education programmes and Research Centres should be emphasized.

Professionals and organizations that have already found a way, to establish a community where they can effectively engage vulnerable populations in creative activities should be able to continue their work and grow without the stress of constant fundraising. A more sustainable funding system, which allows art-education actors to plan at least for 3 or 5 years, build up education programmes strategically, and take advantage of mentoring and support from Networks such as the Step Up Network is one of the solutions.

Moreover, institutional visibility and recognition of the projects' activities is important. The creation of accreditation of competencies in non-formal education could be a good starting point for this recognition.

Another impactful factor would be to assess the capacity of the cultural and social sectors to influence the indirect economic fabric for other, more hegemonic sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, etc. Also, there is a need to generate synergies between cultural, institutional and business sectors as well as reflect more critically on the



positive impact culture has on sustainable development. The importance of cultural policies in relation to social inclusion should be highlighted so that they become part of people's daily lives. A change is needed that puts at the centre cultural participation and the guarantee of cultural rights for all. An effective right to culture means, for instance, the participation of women and young people in rural areas and expanding the models of the past to meet more direct and current needs.

Finally, ensuring fair conditions for workers in the fields of culture, art and social inclusion with long-term employability is a very important success factor. This should be linked to the training development of professionals in the social sector to implement cultural activities with quality and impact on their local community.



Apart from the above key issues, which are in fact in the hands of decision-makers, local governments and also European policy makers, there are recommendations for individuals and organizations that wish to scale-up their interventions. These are examples of practices and approaches which proved to be effective in assuring sustainability of various project achievements. In particular, they supported sharing and further exploitation of good practices and other tangible results of the projects.

- ▶ Designing a systematic upscaling plan is crucial for ensuring a smooth, step-by-step transition of the project's implementation and impact from the local to the national and, then, to the European – transnational levels.
- ▶ Establishing partnerships with a range of different private and public organizations and institutions makes provision for further development and continuation of initiated actions.
- ▶ Documenting and evaluating the project's experience allows for the creation of methodologies and techniques that can enrich the toolbox of the future users and expand the scope of their actions. It is important to identify transferable and non-transferable points and work accordingly to re-adapt the project's content and circle on different levels, if needed.
- ▶ Using various ways to present project findings and outcomes to a wide audience helps to distribute best practices and increase awareness and engagement. Nowadays, the use of digital technologies greatly matters for a successful dissemination.
- ▶ Testing scaling-up against the needs of different settings, before proceeding with scaling up the actual implementation prevents from misguided campaigns.



In addition to the general recommendations above, it is worth presenting in more detail some specific ideas - the most popular ways of sharing know-how and best practices with their potential users.

Publications. They appear in almost every project. However, in order to bring the expected results, they should include the presentation of specific methods, techniques of work and ready-to-use workshop scenarios/learning paths which can be further developed and adjusted to various needs by educators in their own professional practice. The more practical they are, the better for those who would like to use them and promote further. The multilingual editions of both paper-based and electronic versions of the publications further increase the scope of impact.

Trainings. All kinds of workshops and hands-on classes greatly facilitate the application of methods elaborated/tested in projects. Having an opportunity to experience them directly, the participants gain knowledge and skills necessary to successfully use the new tools (learning by doing). Guiding educators through the process of the specific method implementation is a very good way of maximizing projects' effectiveness. Thus, the participants can really understand the logic behind the proposed actions and have a chance to ask questions and discuss problematic and unclear points.

If the trainings are enriched with multimedia/film materials which present the members of vulnerable groups in action, they become even more efficient. A very good and productive practice is to offer training participants an additional support after the classes end (availability for discussing problems and challenges which may arise). Thus, they feel more secure and self-confident in applying new methods and experimenting with them on their own.

Case studies. The use of true stories and examples of positive changes in people's lives can serve as a strong motivational mechanism for using specific methods. There is a big difference between talking about successes and achievements in the project jargon and presenting them through someone's personal victory over addiction or being out of work for many years. It is worth investing in producing high-quality materials (for instance a documentary) showing the real impact of art and creativity on taking decisions and making choices.



In the light of the above considerations, all Step Up Project partners undertook a number of initiatives in order to maximize the projects' effectiveness and longstanding influence. They can be a source of inspiration to all those who search for relevant good practices.



The factor that is crucial for upscaling the project is establishing cooperation with different organizations and institutions in all partner countries and also abroad (in Slovakia, Cyprus, Lithuania, UK). This can lead to a more extended use of arts and culture, as an educational tool, in the promotion of social inclusion of vulnerable groups. The project partners after the completion of their pilots, trainings and dissemination events were able to create alliances with the social entities involved. They have, in fact, built a network that allows them to generate new projects, organize common activities for fundraising, as well as share relevant information for the training of professionals and cultural employability with people from vulnerable groups. This was made possible through careful and detailed planning of the project actions with a view to reaching a wide and diverse group of professionals from the Adult Education and Arts sectors, including stakeholders, decision makers and academic staff. They were offered an opportunity to participate in various events and activities with the aim of exchanging, testing and disseminating useful methods and approaches suitable for supporting social cohesion.

At the beginning of the project, each partner organized two focus groups in their country in order to gather good practices of cultural activities targeting vulnerable groups. Thus, a communication platform and peer learning environment had been created which contributed to the production of a web-based collection of educational resources (in English), available for external applications free of charge. It will still be maintained after the project completion, serving the needs of adult educators and providers across Europe.

The exchange of experience and expertise took place at the partnership level, too. During the meeting in the first stage of the project, all the partners presented a selection of good practices from their toolbox to their foreign colleagues. As a result of this training, each partner gained new skills and knowledge to further put them into practice in their arts-based pilot activities. Thanks to these workshops a representative group of vulnerable people was also reached. Their active participation in Step Up highly increased the scope of the project impact. The pilot workshop participants became special ambassadors for the use of art and creativity in fostering social inclusion.




Moreover, a number of awareness raising events and trainings for trainers, professionals and stakeholders were organized throughout the project in six partner countries. Various ways of disseminating project findings were used during these events, including hands-on classes, multimedia presentations, lectures, discussions and brainstorming sessions in order to reach a wide range of audiences and to answer different needs.



All of the above-mentioned actions have actually contributed to further development of the qualitative results of the project. Most importantly, the participants of these events can now effectively implement tools shared in the project, encourage others to participate in such activities and to initiate similar actions in their local community.

As already mentioned, the partners jointly created a Toolbox and a Manual which have been used to inform and mobilize other local organizations that are active in the field of art and adult education by sending out materials describing best practices that have stemmed from the project.

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SUMMARY

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the issues raised in the previous sections, several recommendations can be formulated with a view to supporting adult education providers and inspiring decision and policy makers across Europe. As shown, the cases of exclusion vary and occur for a number of reasons. This is why multifaceted modes and interventions are needed to overcome isolation, unequal treatment and social injustice.

The important role of art and culture in combating social exclusion has been recognized and confirmed by the consortium partners for whom creativity in education is a common value. The Step Up project created a special platform for them to share experience, discuss problems and challenges and search for solutions. The findings and results of this fruitful exchange are the contribution to a better understanding of various ways to design and implement cultural projects fostering social inclusion.

The below list of recommendations should be treated as an open set of ideas and suggestions to be further developed and most of all tailored to different contexts, needs and expectations.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT. In order to render social problems visible and call for action it is very important to carry out research on the needs of various disadvantaged groups of adults. Identifying and assessing needs can be achieved by various methods, e.g. by conducting focus groups discussions as it was practiced in the Step Up project.

Upon analyzing needs, the trainer or organization can draw useful conclusions on what should be included in the project, utilize available best practices and match these practices to the suggested target groups, in order for the project to be meaningful and useful.

It is also highly recommended to involve the target group(s) into planning the project's activities, as participatory planning contributes to better catering to participants' ever-changing needs and enhances representation of largely excluded populations.

Also, a close collaboration with social workers, psychologists, other therapists and specialists that have already been following the cases of the participants and have established prior connections with them is the best way to get to the heart of things.

PREPARATORY STAGE. It is essential to create a precise, but flexible plan, which can easily adapt to changes propagated by external or internal factors throughout the implementation phase of every project. In particular, the allocation of sufficient time for all stages of the project and laying out a systematic, well-structured schedule matters greatly for ensuring effective implementation.



Also, the prediction of different challenges resulting from the nature of specific vulnerable groups should be taken into consideration. For instance, if some of the activities planned for people with motor disability or seniors transpire face-to-face, the venue should be a safe, accessible place and well-connected to public transport.

Another necessity is to design the project and its activities according to the funding available, by drawing up a detailed financial management plan. Insufficient funds might prevent the execution of tasks.

EMPOWERING THE ADULT EDUCATION (AE) SECTOR. There's a real need for equipping adult educators who deal with and care for vulnerable persons with the new and effective working tools. This is why it is so important to document best practices, as well as weak points of specific methods and approaches and capitalize on any experience acquired, to further share them with the AE staff. In that context, designing and running various trainings for adult education practitioners with a view to filling specific gaps, which are not fulfilled by the available offers is of great importance. Also, any other forms of improving qualifications of educators, therapists, social workers and artists, should be incorporated in the cultural projects meant for social inclusion. Training and capacity building of professionals in the social sector helps to implement cultural activities with quality and impact on their local community.

Moreover, fair conditions for workers in the fields of culture, art and social inclusion, as well as long-term employability, and financial stability and security, greatly matter for achieving high quality educational programs.

PARTNERSHIPS. It is a must for all project implementers, who want their mission to be further developed, to act in collaboration with different organizations, institutions and individuals. This is necessary in particular for reaching a wider audience but also for exchanging expertise and sharing costs of implementation. Flexibility and being open to the needs and expectations of partners is very important. It sometimes means resignation from well-known and fixed ways of doing things and searching for new solutions. Entering into "alliances" also means to actively involve public and private organizations, that specialize in the area of adult education, in policy-making, in order to create national policies that respond to real issues.

The Step Up Network itself is an example of such a multipurpose partnership model. Lastly, partnering with organizations that have prior experience in working with the respective target groups could contribute to the creation of a familiar, welcoming environment to further encourage participants during the process, as well as mitigating implementation risks.



ACCESSIBILITY. It is a key concept for understanding social inclusion. In the context of education and arts it means to finding effective ways of engaging vulnerable persons in creative actions and learning processes which correspond to their capabilities. To this end, a multidimensional approach is usually needed, since the disadvantaged encounter multiple problems at once, in most cases. A very careful assessment of every method used, against its usefulness for the specific target group, is necessary. There are many ways to encourage greater participation of vulnerable people in adult education programmes and arts-based methods, especially in the context of non-formal education which offers various possibilities. Organizing warm-up activities and rituals to facilitate team building among the participants is one of the examples. Also, dedicating sufficient time to each of the designated activities and laying out a systematic schedule of activities for the participants can prove to be a pivotal point for certain target groups, e.g. adults experiencing homelessness, to whom the lack of consistency and security is extremely demotivating in their everyday lives.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS FOR TARGET GROUPS. With regard to vulnerable groups, it is very important to find adequate links between education and the job market. To this end the cultural sector should be supported with mentoring and monitoring of social entrepreneurship projects, facilitating the employment and structuring of a wide range of potential entrepreneurs ranging from self-employed professionals, companies to social organizations.

In this context, it is strongly recommended to focus on fostering relevant skills and competences in all arts-based projects oriented towards social inclusion. The so-called employability skills and entrepreneurial attitudes can be successfully developed and mastered through various creative exercises and artistic tasks. They can be used to improve communication, teamwork, collaboration and negotiation skills, as well as the ability to make decisions, solve problems, be flexible, motivated and even passionate about the tasks given.

All three disciplines of art implemented in the Step Up Project (puppetry, ceramics and radio) proved to be very useful in preparing pilot workshop participants for taking up new challenges and continuing education. In this respect, the project serves as a good example of how art and culture can consciously stimulate the acquisition of skills that are indispensable in any workplace.





The Step Up project was established with the underlying belief that every adult, regardless of gender, race, age, disability, socio-economic and cultural or ethnic origin, should be provided with the opportunity to access education. These trainings should be effective and high-quality. Even though there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach or a universal method to achieve this ambitious goal, the project partners strongly believe that art and culture have an important role to play in this respect. They offer valuable and effective solutions for improving the situation of vulnerable groups. On the other hand, their successful inclusion depends mostly on the engagement and qualifications of all those who can have an impact on educational practices.

That is why this Report is meant to encourage stakeholders, decision-makers, educators, artists and social activists from various professions to draw inspiration from the project findings and take the initiative themselves.

