



# Encouraging inclusive culture. Baseline Report



Erasmus+

## Encouraging inclusive culture. Baseline Report of the EU project BOOST

Editors: Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard and Aron Weigl, Co-editors: Angela Wieser, Oliver Löscher, Noemi Rosario Martinez, Bente von Schindel, Kevin Murphy, Damien McGlynn, Agnieszka Dadak, Jan Pirnat, David Krasevec, Marjeta Turk.

© 2021: Kulturelle Samråd i Danmark (DK), Interfolk, Institut for Civilsamfund (DK), Voluntary Arts Network (IE), Fundacja Alternatywnych Inicjatyw Edukacyjnych ((PL), EDUCULT - Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung (AT), Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (SI).

All rights reserved. The Curricula Guidelines may be quoted with source reference.

Publisher: Interfolks Forlag  
Layout: Interfolks Forlag  
Published: April 2021

This document has been developed in the framework of the 28 months Erasmus+ development project, Sept 2020 – December 2022, entitled: “Boost Social Inclusion in Amateur Arts and Voluntary Culture “(BOOST).

See the project portal: <https://boostparticipation.eu/>

The project has been supported by the Danish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union



This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and neither the Danish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme nor the European Commission can be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# Contents

<b>I. Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 The Erasmus+ development project .....	4
<i>Context</i> .....	4
<i>Background and need of the project</i> .....	4
<i>Aim of the project</i> .....	5
<i>Definitions of societal benefits</i> .....	5
1.2 Methodological guidelines for the baseline surveys.....	6
<i>Aim of the baseline survey</i> .....	6
<i>Framework of Data Collection</i> .....	6
<i>Lead questions for the Interviews and Focus Groups</i> .....	6
<i>Disposition of the report</i> .....	7
<b>2. National Summary Reports .....</b>	<b>8</b>
The Austrian Summary Report .....	8
The Polish Summary Report .....	17
The Slovenian Summary Report.....	26
The Danish Summary Report.....	32
The Irish Summary Report .....	39
<b>3. Key findings and recommendations .....</b>	<b>48</b>
3.1 Key findings.....	48
<i>Introduction</i> .....	48
<i>Summaries of the national findings</i> .....	48
<i>Outlines of transnational highlights and key findings</i> .....	58
<i>Methodological challenges</i> .....	61
3.2 Recommendations for the benchmarking tool.....	64

# I. Introduction

By Interfolk, Institut for Civilsamfund  
(Interfolk, Institute for Civil Society)

## 1.1 The Erasmus+ development project

### Context

This Baseline Report is published in the framework of 28-months Erasmus+ development project, Sept 2020 – December 2022, entitled: “Boost Social Inclusion in Amateur Arts and Voluntary Culture “(BOOST).

The project has been supported by the Danish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The partnership circle consists of six partners from five EU member states working in the area of participatory culture and liberal adult education. The partners are:

- Det Kulturelle Samråd i Danmark (DK): [www.ksd.one](http://www.ksd.one)
- Interfolk, Institut for Civilsamfund (DK): [www.interfolk.dk](http://www.interfolk.dk)
- Voluntary Arts Ireland (IE): [www.voluntaryarts.org](http://www.voluntaryarts.org)
- The Foundations of Alternative Educational Initiatives (PL): [www.fundacjaie.eu](http://www.fundacjaie.eu)
- EDUCULT – Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung (AT): [www.educult.at](http://www.educult.at)
- Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (SI): [www.jskd.si](http://www.jskd.si)

### Background and need of the project

The huge civil society sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage<sup>1</sup> in the European member states not only provide joy, friendship, and meaning for the participants, but it can also support and strengthen societal benefits.

However, this potential for fostering societal benefits can be improved by a more conscious development work by the learning providers in the sector (multiplication to the direct target groups); and by a strengthened support from the key stakeholders (mainstreaming to the indirect target groups).

There is a need for developing new tools and methods to improve the work with the many potentials for societal benefits.

---

<sup>1</sup> Here is used a tripartite division of the sector, where “heritage” is included together with “amateur arts” and “voluntary culture”.

## Aim of the project

The aim of the project is to support lifelong learning providers in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage to work more consciously and systematically in promoting societal benefits. Until now, learning providers in the sector can use many good practice examples as inspiration and support.

However, there is a need for more systematic tools and methods for the learning providers on how to concretely assess their own activities and implement improved practice. The first step is to provide a baseline survey to clarify the societal benefits' categories and levels for benchmarking.

## Definitions of societal benefits

In former EU projects, some of the partners have worked with different aspects of key societal benefits, such as **social inclusion**, **social cohesion**, and **active citizenship**:

Typically, the meaning of “**social inclusion**”<sup>2</sup> in the field of arts and culture implies:

- to ensure *equal opportunities* for all to have access to and enjoy arts and culture
- to enable full and *active participation* of every member of the society in all aspects of life, incl. arts and culture. (*counter discrimination* due to social background, education, income, ethnicity, gender, or mental or physical disabilities).
- to *empower* (and cultivate) poor and marginalized people to take advantage of burgeoning global opportunities, also in the area of arts and culture.<sup>3</sup>

Typically, the meaning of “**social cohesion**”<sup>4</sup> implies:

- To promote *mutual recognition* between different social groups
- To ensure *mutual trust* between the citizens
- To enable *co-creative* artistic and cultural activities

Furthermore, we have another key concept for social change or societal benefits that is important in the field, namely “**active citizenship**”<sup>5</sup>, which also in the field of arts and culture implies:

- To be engaged in activities that sustain and promote *democratic values and attitudes*,
- To be *involved in communities* and democracy, from local to national and global levels.
- To be *committed to the common good* and the welfare of society.

---

<sup>2</sup> The definition used by United Nations is: “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.”

See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/socialperspectiveondevelopment/issues/social-integration.html>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/social-inclusion/27360>

<sup>4</sup> See the State of the Art survey from the BRIDGING project; or EU Commission about “social cohesion” in the context of culture and creativity: <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/selected-themes/cohesion-and-well-being>.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://lllplatform.eu/policy-areas/xxi-century-skills/active-citizenship/>

## 1.2 Methodological guidelines for the baseline surveys

### Aim of the baseline survey

The Baseline Survey aims at researching concrete success factors and challenges of promoting societal benefits with stakeholders from the sector.

The Baseline Survey aims at identifying pre-conditions, success factors and main barriers of social benefit promotion in amateur arts and voluntary culture activities in order to define categories and levels that need to be considered in a benchmarking system.

The expected impact of the Baseline Survey is not only to sensitize the stakeholders that will be included in the research on the topic and on the project but also to support the sector in a long-term perspective by providing a survey on the matter.

### Framework of Data Collection

Methodologically, data collection includes literature review but has mainly included at least 30 expert interviews (6 per country) and 5 focus groups (1 per country) with selected experienced learning providers in the field of amateur arts and voluntary culture on their perspectives concerning the research questions.

Each partner has made summaries of the data collection, with 4-6 pages summarising the results of the interviews and the focus group discussion. The five survey summaries are presented in chapter 2 in this report.

Here the collected data are summarized along the research questions about providing recommendations on which factors we need to assess to clarify their added community values, including social inclusion, social cohesion, and active citizenship.

### Lead questions for the Interviews and Focus Groups

The lead questions for the interviews and focus groups were the following:

1. Which organisation are you working for and in which function?
2. What activities do you offer and for what purpose? Which target groups do you want to reach?
3. In what way do your activities support mutual trust and recognition between different people?
4. In your experience, what are factors that support and what are factors that impede building mutual trust and recognition between different social, economic, or cultural groups?
5. Does that mean that you also aim at attracting an audience with a variety of social, economic, or cultural background in your activity?
6. Do you (intend to) reach also vulnerable groups and people that – due to their social, economic, or cultural background – are normally excluded from participation in cultural life?
  - a. Could you give any examples of what you do in order to reach and include these groups, to provide these groups access to your activities?

7. In your experience, what are the challenges in reaching and including such new audiences and disadvantaged and potentially socially excluded groups?
8. From your experience, what do you think needs to be in place during your activities in order to make it successful in terms of being inclusive and accessible to excluded groups?
  - a. Potential sub-question: what preconditions in terms of the communication, the format, atmosphere and place of the activity or the membership in the organisation?
9. In what way do your activities contribute to building and strengthening democratic values? What are important factors that can help this happen?
10. Is there anything else you consider important if organizations in amateur arts and voluntary culture want to boost social benefits?

The following areas and functions could be in focus during the interviews and focus group sessions; so at least many of them were covered during the surveys:

- I. Activities & events
  - Programming
  - Promotion & programme materials
  - The formats of the activities
- II. Organizational culture
  - The atmosphere in the organisation
  - Mission statements & policy papers
- III. Career opportunities for active members (recruitment, education, positions)
- IV. Demographics
  - Profile of members
  - Profile of boards and staff
- V. Collaboration with other organisations and groups
- VI. Management aspects
  - Decision-making processes
  - Commitment of resources/budget
  - Suppliers & procurement policy
  - Monitoring & evaluation processes

## **Disposition of the report**

Here in the 1<sup>st</sup> section, the methodological approach is outlined; and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> section, the series of five national surveys are presented.

In the final 3<sup>rd</sup> section, the surveys are analysed, and the key findings are summarised, including the clusters of transnational findings; and finally the perspectives and recommendations for designing the Benchmarking Tool are outlined.

Hereby, the Baseline Survey will help to provide common grounds for identifying categories, topics and indicators for the design of the Benchmarking Tool, which is the next intellectual output of the project.

## 2. National Summary Reports

### The Austrian Summary Report

By EDUCULT, Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung  
(EDUCULT, thinking and acting in culture and education)

#### 1. Frame of respondent contact

In the course of the baseline survey for the Erasmus+ project BOOST: Social Inclusion in Amateur and Voluntary Arts, six interviews and one focus group with representatives of cultural associations and organizations of participatory culture from different parts of Austria were conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. The interviews took place digitally via Zoom with one interviewer from EDUCULT and one interviewee from each organization and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

The Austrian focus group took place digitally via Zoom and lasted two hours. Six organizations/representatives participated and after a short round of introductions, under the moderation of an EDUCULT staff member, the prerequisites, challenges and solution strategies for social inclusion, cohesion and democratic values were discussed. Participants reported from their own experiences, compared approaches, and partly summarized the topics together on a meta-level.

#### 2. Interview Summaries

##### *Interview 1*

was conducted with the pedagogical director of an open theatre organization in Salzburg that focuses on inclusive and participatory theatrical activity. The theatre works with various target groups ranging from multicultural students to people with disabilities to people with migration experience, among others.

The interviewee highlighted several factors which are necessary for inclusive work. It is important to offer free or low-cost activities, so that income is not a barrier preventing participation in or attendance of events. To build social cohesion and trust, it is vital to offer programming regularly and long term. Theatre groups take time (and other resources such as funding) to build, it takes time to get participants to trust one another and themselves, and it takes time to develop the themes to present to the audience.

The director emphasized that part of his goal in creating performances is for “the audience not to be able to tell: were these professional actors or people with disabilities or this or that—I love when you succeed in blurring these boundaries.” This changes the perception of the actors involved and builds recognition. It is also essential to network with social institutions in order to reach the target group and to understand their needs and preferences



as they would tie into a theatre project; an organization cannot wait for marginalized people to reach out to them, the organization must reach out and make the first contact.

### ***Interview 2***

was conducted with the founder and director of a studio community for people with cognitive disabilities and with “special abilities and needs” in rural Vorarlberg.

However, this definition of the target group is deliberately avoided in practice and instead participants are referred to as artists working in the studio, internally as well as externally. These people are invited to the studio through the mediation of social organizations or carers and are given the opportunity to work there on a long-term basis, mainly with techniques of Fine Arts. Under guidance, the artists create their own works, which are then exhibited and sold at public exhibitions.

Working together in the studio and presenting their works to the public creates trust and recognition. Through this conscious public appearance, the artists gain self-confidence in their own work and also experience recognition from people who were previously rather patronizingly ‘smiling’ about it. It therefore takes contact between groups to build trust and promote inclusion. However, a kind of competitive situation with larger social institutions leads to the fact that the spaces are mostly not used to capacity, as the smaller studio is structurally disadvantaged in the placement of disadvantaged persons. This in turn leads to financial difficulties.

Despite insufficient public support, those activities contribute to the right to education and free development. “The artists here participate in the preservation of diversity and uniqueness, they promote and expand art, they value craft, they stand for inclusion and acceptance of species and human diversity.”

### ***Interview 3***

was conducted with a representative from an open cultural house/centre that focuses on providing space for collaboration and affordable cultural events, including many participatory events such as poetry slams, open mics, and story nights, among others.

The interviewee placed great emphasis on the physical space and atmosphere of the centre for fostering trust and participation. The space should feel imperfect and informal, so that people feel at ease and feel as though they can go on stage and perform without judgement. These participatory events then build trust and connections between audiences and performers, though these groups tend to be relatively homogenous. Parallel events are sometimes held at the centre, addressing diverse target groups with different social and cultural backgrounds. This heterogeneity creates, albeit unplanned, opportunities for contact with new art forms and people from different social groups, though the representative emphasized that social contacts between groups remain individualized and limited.

Promoting democratic values through participatory events is a big focus of the organization, encouraging people to not just passively consume but actively engage in different facets of life.

#### ***Interview 4***

was conducted with the management of a publicly subsidised cultural association that offers a longer-term access card to different art and cultural activities for socio-economically disadvantaged people in Burgenland.

This card makes it possible to attend cultural events (often with accompaniment) for free or at a reduced price. Tickets are issued by larger social organizations that have contact with this target group. Therefore, the association is dependent on cooperation partners from the social sector who distribute the cards as well as on cultural organisers who accept their use. So far, the entitlement card is only available in paper form, but a digital app is currently being developed to reach even more people and reduce barriers. This initiative exists in almost all Austrian federal states in order to make this offer accessible beyond the region. The association also supports artists who live and work in precarious situations by connecting them and integrating them into events. Access to art and culture is understood as a fundamental human right that gives disadvantaged people the opportunity to integrate into social structures from which they were previously largely excluded.

That card creates visibility, social participation, co-decision making in public events/discussions, and gives every opinion a new weight and a platform. "We don't just talk about the people, but the affected people have their own say." This contributes to civil courage and democratic decision-making. From this perspective, art and culture are therefore means for personal fulfilment and development, provide new social impulses, enable broadening of horizons as well as discussions with all groups at all levels. Mobility, voice, participation and low-threshold access are prerequisites for this. The recognition of all groups is social inclusion and the removal of barriers promotes social cohesion.

#### ***Interview 5***

was conducted with a representative of an organization in Carinthia whose focus is on working with people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The organization offers a broad range of activities including German classes, a German language café, dance projects, photography projects and exhibits, festivals, and more.

The language cafés create a space for social integration through improving participants' language skills and allowing participants and volunteers to learn from and teach each other. The participant-led dance projects aim at building up confidence and trust of participants in themselves and between participants (participants come from broad cultural and national backgrounds and of different genders and age groups).

The performances also expose audiences to an artistic output created by migrants; the interviewee explained that the reception of these performances is overwhelmingly positive, and those who have had preconceived notions about immigrants often have them challenged

or dispelled. Many of those who participate in events also volunteer or donate funds to the organization, taking active part in shaping events and offers. Thus, people go from passive consumers of events to active creators and participants.

### ***Interview 6***

was conducted with a representative of a decentralised cultural centre in Vienna, which is integrated into a large social-charitable institution in Austria. This integration creates security of resources and enables innovation and long-term development of services. The cultural centre functions as an event, education and cultural space and tries to address a diverse target audience with different formats and activities, mainly from their own neighbourhood, which has less access to art and cultural offers.

Places of encounter and exchange are created by means of consumption programmes and community building as well as open and closed education and networking offers. Inclusion is to be achieved through openness and diversity in the team as well as in public relations. Above all, the centre uses multilingual concepts, content relevant to the target group and visual language that conveys diversity to address people who are diverse in their stories and backgrounds and who participate less in artistic and cultural life.

In addition to art education, these stories should be given a platform and a diverse audience should be invited to participate in creative creation and interaction processes in order to enable equal access to artistic and cultural offerings, as stated in the UN Human Rights Charter. Working together towards a goal and sharing experiences in a social group “builds trust and welds together.” Sincere curiosity and appreciation of the respective target groups are seen as prerequisites for this. “Proximity, personal connection and time are factors that can work for you and create trust.”

### **3. Focus Group Summary**

The participants of this focus group included cultural organizations and initiatives from across urban and rural Austria. These included 1) a venue for arts and culture in a rural space which hosts events and exhibits in rural Vorarlberg 2) an organization in Tirol that focuses on minority groups, hosting events and building connections that empower various minority groups, building alliances between minority groups and between minority and majority groups 3) a cultural organization in Salzburg that hosts art events and rents space to other organizations 4) an organization in Vienna that partners with social and cultural institutions to give out passes that enable individuals with low socioeconomic status to attend cultural events and institutions free of charge 5) a centre in Graz that holds art and cultural events for community members, and that rents out rooms to other organizations 6) a ‘lab’ for art and social activities which hosts hundreds of activities per year, often working in long term partnerships with other cultural institutions. The focus group brought several shared strategies, opportunities, and difficulties into view.

To some degree, many organizations focus on participatory events and participatory design of their activities, one representative emphasizing drawing on “participants as experts”. They discussed the importance of their target groups having a say in the structure and content of events, in order to avoid a “paternalistic relationship between the organization and target group.” The importance of participatory work “in the development, conception, and execution [of events] and then, maybe this level is the most difficult of all, to overcome the conservatism in our own structures and to make the structures themselves more participatory, and thus more inclusive” was underlined. Participation and co-creation in the development of activities is an essential point, which was described by one representative as “change instead of mediation.”

This connected with another point highlighted by several of the participants: the members and employees of the organization must themselves be diverse in order to reach and work with diverse groups. Many participants laid emphasis on the consistent reflection required within the organization to reach standards of diversity and accountability—some participants said their organizations have regular meetings to reflect on the inclusivity of their work and on potential changes. This is a constant work that they feel is vital.

Building trust and social cohesion between different groups was one difficulty many organizations faced. One shared that when they host events engaging with themes relevant to different rural populations (for example, farming) people from those groups will attend these events, but this does not extend beyond those events to others offered by the venue, thus those target groups remain isolated from other groups. Another underlined this difficulty but mentioned one strategy that helps them connect multiple social groups at once was using a venue with a different regular target audience than the target group of the event, bringing those two groups in touch with each other. But others struggled more—one representative explained that though they host events for many different groups they have never been able to successfully bring those groups in contact with each other. This is a collective challenge that one called the field’s supreme discipline.

Another point of tension and difficulty was funding. Different interviewees discussed their various strategies for obtaining funding, including petitioning different departments within local and state governance structures, but also reaching out to private organizations when government funding was insufficient. Overall, it seems that organizations sometimes struggle to obtain, or at least increase, the level of funding they receive year to year. Many organizations try to make their events low cost or free to prevent this from being a barrier to participation and because “art should be freed from commercialism” which makes obtaining other funding all the more important. One representative asked if the others also apply for funding from both the social and cultural sector, as their work is located at exactly this intersection, which also makes different subsidies possible. This was partly affirmed, but at the same time reference was made to the federal state-specific funding systems.

A further issue discussed was how to incorporate and address marginalized and excluded groups using descriptors and language that foster a sense of equality rather than paternalism. Focus group participants highlighted placing emphasis less on the group to which people are

assigned, and more on the experiences and knowledge that people have related to their position in society as a strategy for avoiding hierarchical language: “We try to focus less on this vulnerability and more on empowerment and ability.” For this, it is important to know the realities of the target groups' lives and to respond to their needs. According to one statement, authenticity in communication and access play a special role in building trust. Here again, it is important to critically question one's own communication, one's own structure and one's own approaches and to act honestly.

The importance of networks and cooperation was also elicited. Networks are also essential for working with and reaching target groups, as well as for potentially putting different groups in contact with each other. One participant stated: “We want to create networks that really deal with the injustices and the necessary redistribution and the necessary rethinking as regards cooperation.” It was reported that cooperation with public agencies and large social institutions that act as contact points for many marginalized groups, as well as cooperation with small cultural associations that have a different target audience, are important to reach disadvantaged people and to achieve interaction between different groups.

Overall, the participants shared many of the practical experiences and recognised shared challenges and difficulties in inclusive cultural work. However, there were also some differences, mainly due to organizational and content-related orientation, financial situation and geographical location. The impression was that the organizations could learn from each other's strategies and approaches, which was also expressed through individual statements at the close of the meeting.

## **4. Observations and Final Recommendations**

### ***4.1 Time and place as inclusive factors***

The importance of adequate time and fitting location were addressed as necessary conditions for working inclusively. Though dependent on the project and the target groups, events or cooperation need to be long term enough to offer time to build trust and cohesion. The setting of an event is also essential, as it affects who can attend and how included they feel.

Inclusive work is not short-term work. Many art and cultural activities need to be offered consistently over the long term for participants to develop the confidence and trust needed to foster social cohesion and for consistent contact between diverse groups. Long-term cooperation can also be useful for partnerships between cultural and social organizations, as time allows for building trust between different actors and gives opportunity to understand and overcome challenges.

Place is also an important consideration, as the location of an event will affect how accessible it is to various participants. An inclusive event must be an accessible one, one that is open to all, hosted in a space where people feel comfortable, accepted, and valued. Place can also affect social interaction between groups—it can be good practice to host an event at a venue that

has a different audience to the target group, as this can lead to attendance of, and thus interaction between, people from different social groups. This interaction is necessary for fostering social inclusion.

#### ***4.2 Participation and co-creation instead of pure consumption***

Each of the representatives emphasized the importance of participation in cultural work, either through employing participants' expertise in shaping events or through hosting events that are themselves participatory. The representatives from the cultural sphere noted that their responsibility is not to bring pre-made and completed events to various groups, but to first find out what people want and need. This is essential because, particularly when working with vulnerable or marginalized groups, no one has a better understanding of their own needs and preferences.

Involving people in designing the event aids in creating an authentic offer and in communicating to participants that their interests are being taken seriously. Co-creation is vital for promoting social cohesion by avoiding paternalism, especially when none or few of the organizational staff belong to the group being targeted. It is also important to draw from participants' experience as experts because they have specialized knowledge and information that others do not, and making use of that experience creates an event that more directly caters to what participants want and need.

Participatory events also strengthen democratic values by encouraging active participation in decision making rather than passive consumption. Participants have to collectively make decisions regarding activities and their structure instead of just being told what to do, which also assures those involved that their voices can be heard.

#### ***4.3 Low-threshold through communication and language***

Low-threshold access is one of the terms often mentioned in connection with inclusion. In order to gather and connect different groups, barrier-free access is needed so that no group is excluded due to their socio-economic backgrounds. Low-threshold access can be seen in pricing, content, atmosphere, and location, but also in communication and language. The way in which target groups are spoken to and about, how they are addressed, and which language is used are important factors for the inclusivity of one's own activities.

Multilingual concepts in the promotion of one's own organization help to address a diverse audience and invite them to activities. This builds trust and empathy, creates recognition of cultural heterogeneity and reaches new target groups that feel little addressed by monolingual cultural offerings. This in turn leads to social integration and the creation of a platform for diversity and interaction. In the discussions with experienced practitioners, it also became clear that hierarchical attributions such as "marginalization" or "disadvantage" are not used. Instead of judgemental descriptions, expressions such as "differences," "diversity" or "backgrounds" are used. Stigmatising language is (sub)consciously avoided both in internal and public conceptual inclusive cultural work, as well as in communication with the target groups themselves, in order to build trust and promote inclusivity. The survey

in Austria has shown that these communication strategies contribute to making activities more inclusive.

#### ***4.4 Networking between social groups as the supreme discipline***

In order to achieve social inclusion and cohesion through cultural work and to build trust between different social groups, two essential steps have to be taken. Firstly, it is necessary to create and publicize events interesting to diverse groups and marginalized communities, and secondly, one must bring participants together in activities and connect them with each other.

The first step is achieved through offering content relevant to the target group, authenticity in appearance/communication and low-threshold offers that address the lived experience of the target groups. The second step is the supreme discipline: networking diverse social groups and building a sustainable connection between them in order to promote inclusiveness is often the biggest challenge in practice, which for many organizations is a “daily struggle.” As explained in 3.1, it helps to create long-term networking opportunities and to use different locations with different target groups. A crucial prerequisite is to acknowledge participants as experts and foster their equal participation. This can create bonding and co-determination, whereby the different target groups experience sincere interest, recognition and appreciation in their characteristics. It was reported that different backgrounds also bring tensions and prejudices and that a “safe space” cannot be guaranteed, but these can be reduced through active encounters and communication. If it is possible to give different groups a platform through participatory programmes where their own abilities can be presented, other social groups can recognise and appreciate them. This builds trust between participants and creates social recognition.

#### ***4.5 Social media and digitalisation for more reach***

In the course of promotion of inclusive cultural and educational offers, innovative digital strategies are increasingly used to reach a larger target audience. The challenge is to interest people who have less access to art and culture and are thus less likely to be attracted to socio-cultural education and networking offers.

This can be achieved by using the possibilities offered by social media. Despite often low resources for public relations work, regular, target group-relevant and graphically designed content is an indicator of success in target group communication. The visual language used is also crucial in determining the extent to which groups feel addressed. For example, the depiction of people with different cultural backgrounds and origins or a multilingual text on promotional images suggests a form of welcome diversity to users and subconsciously invites a heterogeneous audience. Associations created through imagery and multilingualism can help to attract a diverse audience to one's own offer. This can also lead to irritation and misinterpretation if the visual language evokes different or additional associations than the publishers actually intended. But this kind of irritation can also arouse attention and interest.. However, if people feel encouraged to participate in activities, this communication strategy creates a starting point for interaction and discussion. The digitalisation of offers or contact

can also be a promising factor. The lower the threshold of initial (digital) contact, e.g. through an app or communication via social media messenger functions, the easier it is for people who have so far unconsciously avoided inclusive cultural and educational offerings to participate.

#### ***4.6 Funding and cooperation at the interface between the cultural and social sector***

Co-creating work relevant to the target group and marketing it accordingly is one thing, but actually addressing marginalized and disadvantaged groups and making contact with them in order to achieve social inclusion is another. It can be helpful to use existing structures and networks of social and cultural organizations that already have access to these target groups by establishing cooperation.

In Austria, this can be large social charitable organizations or public institutions such as the Labour Market Service. Likewise, smaller cultural associations with a specific audience can act as cooperation partners here. Due to the already existing contact, the barriers for participation are not as high as with an initial contact and cultural and educational offers are mediated on an existing basis of trust. Such collaborations are also recommendable for socially inclusive cultural and educational work for reasons of content, as this work is located at the interface between the social and cultural spheres and additional competences can be brought on board.

Cultural and educational organizations in Amateur Arts and Voluntary Culture can also make use of this interface in funding. Since these actors are often dependent on public funding, this social mission (in addition to the cultural) offers an opportunity to apply for additional subsidies. Due to the federalist funding system in Austria, no supra-regional recommendations can be made here, but precisely this interface makes it possible in many cases to acquire not only cultural but also social/integration funding.

#### ***4.7 Reflection and diversity in the team for authenticity***

The survey steps brought to the forefront the importance of inclusivity not only in activities themselves but also in organizational structures and attitudes. The interviewed participants stressed the need for diversity within the staff of an organization as well as consistent reflection on inclusive work. Having a diverse team was seen as essential for creating authentic relations and social cohesion, while also being something that many of the organizations interviewed struggled with. Turning inward and trying to create a more inclusive organizational team can be very difficult but was presented as a long-term goal for the sector, one that must be reached in order to reach diverse audiences.

Along these lines, reflection was also seen as an essential component of inclusive work, both within an organization and between organizations and various partner institutions, event participants, and experts. Interview participants mentioned the importance of regular reflection for accountability on inclusive work. These regular meetings help organizations adjust to constantly changing socio-cultural conditions, to understand the lived experience of different target groups, to adapt their language, communication methods and appearance if necessary, to regularly create relevant content, etc., in order to work in a target group-



oriented way. Without reflection, it would be difficult for organizations to overcome the challenges presented throughout this report.

## The Polish Summary Report

By Fundacja Alternatywnych Inicjatyw Edukacyjnych  
(Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives)

### 1. Frame of respondent contact

There were six interviews conducted in January 2021. Four of those interviews were realised via internet communication, two as telephone conversations. All the interviewees were women. The interviews were recorded. The conversations were 1 – 1,5 hours long each.

The focus group interview took place 12<sup>th</sup> of February 2021, via internet communicator. The interview took about two hours. There were five people participating. Three of them were also participating in the previous, individual interviews; two people were new. All the interviewees were women. The interview was recorded.

### 2. Summary of the interviews

#### *Interview 1*

The interviewee is the Director of the Communal Library and Culture House in a small village. She is involved in wide educational, cultural, local heritage - related activities with the general aim 'education and cooperation' of the whole community.

The local history, artistic activities have potential to develop the local community, to support mutual trust and recognition. In order to achieve this, the activities must be interesting, bringing something new, giving a different perspective. What supports building mutual trust and recognition are: Courage and consistency in action, getting rid of the complex of a 'person from the countryside'; taking care of the merits. It is worth building on the local tradition, local history, interesting people living around – but also - courageously reaching for things from the outside. Aiming at attracting a varied audience it's important not to divide, to "*meet with the people, not with the differentiating factors*". If open and supportive – the diversity just 'happens'.

In order to include vulnerable groups, first it is important to listen to the people, then doing something about what you've heard. In order to include socially excluded groups – to run an open institution. What is important are: Small steps, being consequent, courage and not forgetting about the people when 'the project ends'. In terms of being inclusive and accessible, you need to know "*what people live from and when they have time*".

To contribute to strengthening democratic values it is worth *remembering* "*you have the choice*". *It is you who decides...*" As advice for the organisations that want to boost social benefits, she quotes some mottos important for the organisations she is involved in: "*share*

*your knowledge, multiply ideas”, “lifelong learning”, “be afraid, try – do”, “have the courage, be optimistic ..and move forward”, “be authentic, open, build trust”.* The internal, organisational aspects: the managers must take care to prevent burnout, ‘keep’ the motivated team.

## ***Interview 2***

The interviewee is responsible for the cultural and educational projects in an association in a medium-sized city. She is also a board member. Currently she works mostly as an educator; developing an author’s method of working with a puppet theatre. The purpose of the activities of the organization is to ensure multilateral, diverse support for the people in need. The organisation is running several types of activities: occupational therapy workshops, vocational activity institution, the Social Integration Center, the Social Economy Support Center and various projects.

For supporting mutual trust and recognition, she mentioned two dimensions: Answering the real need of each human being – to create and a sense of purpose. What impedes building mutual trust and recognition is that the need to create loses out to more “urgent” needs related to the life situation. Sometimes the barrier also is the field of arts: the puppet theatre is perceived as “childish”, “unserious”. Speaking about supporting factors: People from groups endangered with social exclusion have very strong need of overcoming isolation – it may be strongly motivating. Another important factor is that the effect is equally important as the process. Concentrating on the process only won’t bring social benefits. Their activities aim at attracting an audience with a variety of backgrounds. At the beginning the association offered their artistic workshops mostly for people supported by specific institutions – for example people with addictions, motoric disabilities. There was always the assumption to not to get closed, to go beyond the context of the ‘groups in need’, to also perform for the ‘normal people’.

In order to reach and include vulnerable groups, the method that really works is cooperating with specialised institutions and organisations offering support to specific groups. Among the challenges in reaching such new audiences are: The life situation and limitations of the field of art. What helps is her method of work. In order to be successful in terms of being inclusive, she mentioned: Being able to reach the target groups; attractions for the involved; having a specific goal, delivering a measurable effect.

When it comes to strengthening democratic values - she wouldn’t overestimate this effect. It appears, but in relation to individual, single people. Concerning other recommendations for boosting social benefits, it is worth to mention the educator: The most important is to be convinced of what you choose from the field of arts, what you want to show people. Being authentic. Only then many other people can get involved. When it comes to the additional recommendations: the best advice is to follow what is happening around, trying to use each opportunity to develop the organisation.

### ***Interview 3***

The Interviewee is the manager of a choir association in a small town. She sings in the choir; there are 25 - 30 people singing, men and women, of various ages, from various social groups. From the members' perspective, the aim of the activities is the choir members' development and integration. The 'external' target groups – the audience – are mostly the people from the region. They give concerts, promoting practically each kind of music. Often they represent the city on various events, 'adding splendour'. Most of the events they take part in are free of charge.

Concerning support for mutual trust and recognition, from the 'internal' perspective, the choir members are people who meet systematically, there is time to learn from each other. Thanks to that they are also better perceived by the audience – the spectator may feel there is a good atmosphere in the group. What supports building mutual trust and recognition are: discipline, good leadership and good cooperation between the association and the local government. What impedes are too little knowledge about and too little access to sources of co-financing different than at the local level.

Asked if the activities aim also is to attract an audience with a variety of backgrounds, she answers that it is quite natural various people can join and participate. Recruitment to the choir is open. For the audience – the concerts are mostly free of charge. They perform various kinds of music that fits to various musical tastes.

Concerning the experience with reaching vulnerable groups, the choir organised concerts in social welfare homes. This possibility strongly depends on the attitude of the managers of such institutions. Speaking about the related challenges, it may be just the lack of the proper space – for example lack of the common room big enough to have a concert there. The challenge may also be the lack of people to cooperate with. Among the factors that need to be in place to be inclusive and accessible is the recognisability, some 'market position' of the cultural/inclusive offer provider. The other success factor is diverse repertoire.

Concerning democratic activity, it is a kind of natural that the people active in the choir are also active in other spheres. The choir members are interested in what is happening locally. For boosting social benefits, it is worth mentioning that the cultural activity may become "contagious" when it becomes clear that the local commune can develop and promote itself through cultural events. Referring to the internal, organisational factors: The association has a very good board, "five persons who are aware who can do what and what the others can count for". If there is trust, sense of responsibility, reliability – it is possible to work well. Being active in an association gives you a sense of purpose.

### ***Interview 4***

The interviewee is the president of a young association of designer makers and craftspeople from different parts of Poland, with different professional backgrounds and experience. She is representing the association and is responsible for internal communication. She is a ceramic artist. The aim of the activities is to widely promote the associations' members and

craftsmanship in general. The association organises exhibitions, takes part in craft fairs, debates and discussions concerning the role of crafts and related subjects. Some of the members organise crafts-workshops. The target groups are perceived widely, it is 'everyone'.

Mutual trust and recognition are important to build within the organisation. Externally – they do their best to get noticed, to talk to various people, also the decision makers. They also influence each other, learn from each other. It makes them all more visible and their messages better heard. Speaking about the associations' members, what supports building trust and recognition are: 'Interdisciplinary' group of members and the fact that they are all well-educated and social media savvy. The diversity makes them also interesting for the media. From the 'external point of view', 'making something with your own hands' becomes more and more attractive and popular. What impedes their activities are the formalities, bureaucracy. What impedes is also the common perception of the crafts in the society - "you have a wonderful life, you just sit there and stick in clay", forgetting that the craftsmen also need to pay for the workshop, pay taxes and social security fees, take care about accountancy, promotion in social media.

Asked about attracting an audience with a variety of backgrounds she says they didn't think about it yet. Right now, they don't have a person who would have the competences in the 'social' field, interested and skilled to work with vulnerable groups. To make the activities inclusive and accessible the organisers need to develop a clear concept of the organisation, clear and attractive message. Then - get the attention various media, with this clear message. They present themselves in various contexts – social media, exhibiting in a popular chain-shop window in the city centre, pop-up stores, speaking to decision makers, organising and co-organising events and exhibitions.

Internally, building and strengthening democratic values may be supported by having high expectations towards the members when it comes to their activity and involvement. On the organisational level, what works is a common goal. The fact that each of the members see their own benefits. Regularity, working in an orderly manner.

### ***Interview 5***

The interviewee is the president of an association registered in a city. She is a coordinator; used to work as an educator. The most recognisable activities are the cyclical musical workshops run by recognised musicians. Admission is open for all interested; there is a fee. The other area is organising concerts of 'alternative' music. Sometimes they are cooperating with theatres, writers, multimedia artists... The aim of activities is promotion of Polish music and musicians from out of the mainstream. The target groups – they don't want to limit themselves anyhow. They also are open for any cooperation – with organisations, institutions.

The effect of building mutual trust and recognition is especially visible among the cyclical workshop participants. They get motivated, get more open, willing to offer their support to others. In terms of supporting/impeding the activities, supports: Openness for cooperation

from the side of supporting institutions and a 'good team' at the association. Factors that impede are bureaucracy; current politics; low interest of private support.

For attracting an audience with a variety of backgrounds: they approach those groups. There is neither economic exclusion, nor age limitations. There are musicians with disabilities performing. It seems quite natural to organise events in an accessible manner. The possible 'vulnerable groups' are welcomed, usually there are no barriers for their participation. Their solution for challenges in reaching and including new audiences is presence on social media and visibility in the traditional, local/regional media. In order to be inclusive what is needed is, simply, money. Apart from money: cooperation, punctuality, transparent finances, mutual support in the team.

Speaking about democratic values, cyclical events participants get more open to cooperation, start to help each other, support each other, tend to support other activities. Among the recommendations are: Openness, avoiding stereotyping, promoting in various channels, friendliness, welcoming everyone with open arms. Cooperation: Both inside the association and outside. Being open for cooperation with the local authorities – not getting discouraged here. Finally, speaking about organisational matters, what helps is that there are few of them, having the same goals, there is trust and willingness to be active, persistence.

### ***Interview 6***

The interviewee is a president of a foundation active in a little village. She is a coordinator, animator, and runs handicraft workshops. Previously, for 12 years she was the commune councillor; used to run a local association. The Foundations' activities are focussed on having an offer for more varied groups: from various generations, people with disabilities, the 'old inhabitants' and the newcomer citizens. The aim is the integration of the local community. They work in the culture heritage field.

Speaking about supporting trust and mutual recognition, a good example: The Foundation regularly organises bus-trips to places related to local heritage. The excursions are usually co-funded, invitations are being widely announced. The group is always intergenerational, people with disabilities are welcomed, both "old" and "new" citizens are invited. The leader takes care about 'animation' while the group sits together in the bus. This makes people learn about each other, mix, integrate, build relations... The common rule is that 'no one judges anyone' – so people can feel safe. What supports building mutual trust and recognition are: Availability of funds, being open for admitting "all interested", the volunteers. What impedes is the lack of a space to meet.

Speaking about audiences from a variety of backgrounds, the main aim is intergenerational integration, based on the local heritage. The Foundations' team is doing their best to also reach vulnerable groups of people. Thanks to individual approach, acting step-by-step, building trust, personal invitations – they managed to involve some of the most vulnerable people in the village. Challenges in reaching and including new audiences can be diminished by personal acquaintance, personal invitation but also widely promoting the activities,

involvement of volunteers. Earned trust and recognisability makes it possible to organise inclusive and accessible.

In terms of democratic activity, thanks to taking part in the activities people become socially active. She has consciously built her democratic activity and social leadership. Recommendations for interested in boosting social benefits: it is important that people could trust the organisation and its staff, and may not have the feeling of being judged. The people would join if they feel safe. It is important to approach those in worse economic condition and to join generations.

### **3. Summary of the focus group findings**

The first subject discussed during the group interview concerned the benefits that the organisation may obtain if working also with the purpose of delivering social benefits through their activities. The interviewees mentioned:

- Good perception of the organisation in the community/society – as working for the benefits of the others – and discovering talented people also among the vulnerable groups.
- Boost in creativity of the activities fuelled by the constant need to deliver something ‘new’, ‘fresh’.
- Possibility to build good relations and involved, true cooperation with the local community and ‘connecting people’ – thanks to listening to the needs of the recipients, fulfilling those needs as much as possible.
- Material benefits, for ex. new space for the organisation.

Looking at the other side of the subject, the interviewees then discussed the possible difficulties / challenges / complications that may cause for the organisation organising activities in an inclusive manner: Open and flexible way of cooperating with the local community needs lots of flexibility also from the organisers. ‘There must be someone always available to talk with, someone who listens’ in the organisation – this way of working does not fit all. Things as prosaic as lack of a space to meet or lack of funds make it difficult to be inclusive. The interviewees also noticed the general passivity, low civic activity and reluctance to be involved in activities as volunteers – if there are too little people on board, activities must be limited.

Continuing the subject, the interviewees discussed the factors that could motivate the organisations to act more inclusively. A motivation could be gaining good image and reliability of the organisation, making it a reliable partner for various stakeholders. From the other side such organisations may act more complementary, reacting ‘holistically’ to the real needs. Such an approach might also improve the cooperation between various organisations, fighting the ‘rivalry’ attitude. It was also noticed that organisations working inclusively usually are built by well cooperating people, there is a good atmosphere in the organisation, good management, and the people are open to share knowledge and information. Positive image and recognition facilitate access to decision makers and other resources.

Since speaking about good practices of inviting and involving participants from vulnerable groups, quite interesting seemed the differentiation of process and effect of involving the people at risk of social exclusion. What shall be more important for the education providers? And why? Here all the interviewees were unanimous: Both 'process' and 'effect' are important, but it is the 'process' that matters more, if looking from the society/community developing side. The people, co-creation is more important than the effect. Having the purpose of building the community – the process never ends. What matters most is sustainability. Continuation of activities confirms their attractiveness and building reliability of the providers.

The next area of discussion was built around the question: I think this should say something like "Is it true that the more diverse the cultural offer provided, the more diverse an audience they can reach?" Here the interviewees were quite unanimous too, agreeing that the most important is the offer and the offer providers, their competences and programme: "What and how is more important than who". Following this opinion, the moderator asked what is, in this case, the most important at the backstage of the organisation, in the way it operates, in the way it is managed, in the way the activities are communicated, how relations with stakeholders are being built. What was named was: external communication – narrating well why the organisation is doing something; having clear division of tasks and good manager – supported and respected by the members; having a good, competent representation of the organisation for the contacts with the stakeholders. The common goals, good cooperation, involving volunteers, being authentic and really passionate about the activities done and flexibility were also mentioned.

The last question asked concerned the recommendations for the culture fields organisations that would like to work more inclusively:

- These are shared passions that shall set the direction in which the organization is headed, the passionate need recognition and possibility to satisfy their personal needs. Such an organisational culture is very inclusive and prevents social isolation. Apart from this the organisation needs reliability and an initiator(s) who would set goals and motivate.
- Since talking about the civil society organisations - the people with the 'community workers' talents shall be cherished and more supported, also by the local authorities. These are the people who create benefits for the whole community.
- It is good if the 'groups of passionate people' from various organisations could meet each other. Such opportunities shall be supported.
- If the organisation decides to work for the benefit of the local community, listening to the community members, understanding them is a must. Openness and flexibility are needed.
- 'Technical issues' are important: having the space (an office, a training room), needed equipment, some basic budget secured.

## 4. Comments on observations.

### 4.1. *Is the effect equally important as the process?*

An interesting difference in interpretation appeared between the people working 'directly' with vulnerable groups and people more focussed on being open to such groups as an audience, focussed on social activism and community development.

From the first perspective, as one of the interviewees expressed it: *"Working in the field of art-therapy, engaged arts (...) I am trying to fight with the commonly repeated conviction that in this field the effect is unimportant. What is important is the process. I believe this is a huge misunderstanding. For me the effect is just a part of the process (...) I believe that if you will not offer - even to the people with disabilities, with very serious limitations - the possibility to create something artistically good and interesting, there will be no therapeutic, educational benefits - since there will be no this main reward and satisfaction - the sense of purpose (...) It is always worth it to fight to show something beautiful, wise, interesting, involving..."*

From the other perspective, process is more important than the effect. A good effect may be something that happens 'by the way', and it is fine, because this is not the effect that matters here.

### 4.2. *The importance of cooperation with 'supporting' stakeholders.*

The success in being inclusive often depends on the attitude to cooperation at the side of organisations/institutions having 'direct access' to the vulnerable groups - for ex. social welfare homes, hospitals, therapeutic centres, unemployment offices etc. - and those having access to resources - culture departments, local authorities, etc.

If there is no will to cooperate - inclusive activities may be fewer and more difficult to organise. Sometimes the cooperation must be 'fought for' by the CSOs, it may take several years to build trust and recognition between the non-governmental and institutional parties. Barriers in access to resources result in such prosaic impediments as *"no place to meet"*, *"no place to rehearse"*, *"too little budget to be inclusive"*.

### 4.3. *'Fresh' and 'experienced' organisations perspective.*

Some organisations need to 'get ready' to also reach the vulnerable groups as their audience and/or members. These are the organisations that were not founded, from the very beginning, with the thought to support social inclusion, but have the potential to do it. There is openness for this kind of activity, but their people are aware that they must first have someone competent in the field, interested to take care about this area. The other members would then probably support such a person.

### 4.4. *We the members, we the performers.*

It is noticeable that both perspectives are important for the culture field education providers.



From the one side – the members/the team is very important. Building trust and recognition between the members, possibly – inviting people from vulnerable groups, building a team and a good atmosphere are indispensable for the success of the organisation and its inclusive activities.

From the other side – all the organisations, whose representatives were interviewed, consciously work for broadening their outreach, making the participation accessible and friendly for new audiences, including the vulnerable groups – realistically assessing their possibilities.

#### ***4.5. The ‘context’ factor***

There seems to be a significant difference in possibilities and opportunities, depending on the ‘quantity’ of the target groups. Organisations active in small, local communities have the possibility to an approach, based on the knowledge of the local situation, individual people and their stories. This way of work is more difficult for organisations active in larger cities, directing their offer to a wider audience.

So, the context the organisation works in defines the best practices of activities – that may differ from context to context. In any context though what is essential is a good knowledge about and real interests and the needs of the clients, the attempts to learn as much about them as possible.

#### ***4.6. Democratic activity***

The question concerning the potential of the cultural activities for strengthening democratic values was the most difficult to answer for the interviewees. The interviewees rather underlined individual stories of people who became more democratically active, recalling little of such an effect in general, on the group level.

# The Slovenian Summary Report

By Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (JSKD)  
(Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities)

## 1. Introduction for BOOST beginners

BOOST is an Erasmus+ project that explores societal benefit promotion in amateur arts and voluntary culture activities. In the initial stages of the project, six partners in five EU countries developed the baseline guidelines for expert interviews and focus groups. Both activities were designed to detect pre-conditions, success factors and main obstacles for cultural programs that were identified as examples of best practice in dealing with social inclusion, social cohesion and promotion of democratic values.

In the Slovenian part of the Baseline survey, we conducted six interviews. The interviews took place online (Zoom conference call). With our JSKD project team consisting of three members, each team member was responsible for two interviews. All of the interviews were recorded, and the audio recordings are the basis for the following analysis, excerpts and recommendations. The average length of the interviews was 45 minutes. The gender representation in the interviews was 4 female and 2 male respondents.

All the interviewees were invited to the focus group that was organized after all the interviews were finished. The focus group entitled *Seek and you shall find* included four people from the interviews and three new participants.

## 2. Summary of the interviews

### *Interview 1*

The first interview included a visual artist who also works in performative arts. In a town with 40.000 residents, she started a project group of elderly women who were exploring performative, postmodern and contemporary art forms. There were two key motives behind the project: a shift toward working with the active part of the elderly population and decentralization of contemporary art production. Before the project began, she made a two-year research for the project for which she received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture. In her view, for the project to be successful, you need to have the following two questions answered: 1. Does the project make sense? (Why is this project important for this particular environment?) 2. Can we design the project to be sustainable?

She devised a very intensive and structured process for this project. The participants were meeting their mentors two times a week for two full hours. Getting familiar with contemporary art and gaining confidence with using smart devices was of key importance for the project. The participants had to be ready to empower themselves with skills and with building a safe space for expressing their ideas and needs. It is hard for this generation (especially with all participants being female) to set boundaries. The artistic leaders really

wanted to hear how far the participants were willing to go (nothing against their will should take place in their sessions). Building the atmosphere, developing the skillset of the participants and a common search for new expressive solutions are all visible in the final performance. The sustainability of the project is built in with the first generation of the participants as the link in the chain for developing and working with the new generation. They are also working on a model for transferring the project to different environments.

## ***Interview 2***

The second interviewee is an organizer of a cultural program for amateur arts and voluntary culture activities based in a small town with 25.000 people. They are also covering the wider area (smaller nearby municipalities accounting for additional 35.000 people). In the 1990s, the town in question was one of the biggest reception centres for refugees from the war for Yugoslavia. That is also one of the reasons for the ethnic diversity in the city. The unfortunate events are also connected to the interviewee's first experience with art projects with social benefits. Children's art workshops took place in the town for the local kids and for the newcomers. They were all participants and were not aware that the workshops were designed as an art therapy for children coming from war zones.

For her, the main inclusion entry point is the cultural educational program (for all activities and for all generations). The workshops always result in a final production and are incorporated in regular cultural events in the town. In her opinion, it is the organizer's duty to detect the mental and physical space to find new participants. One way to develop new programs is to follow the reactions of your current participants and go hand in hand with their demands (next level courses or completely new courses). This can only be possible if the learning providers (mentors) know that they have free hands in suggesting new content. What she finds interesting for her work environment is the consumer mentality that free courses are not equally good as the ones with fees. Entry fees should not be a barrier for participation, which is why they developed a system in their community where participants with a difficult social background receive free participation as a reward for their special interest or talent in the desired art form. The sustainability of the projects depends heavily on the quality of the learning providers and the right work conditions. The organizer's role is to be included in the process and be proactive in collecting the participants' responses (sometimes the best time for that is in the middle of the informal breaks). In her experience, the oral examination at the end of the process brings more results than written evaluation. The last (but equally important) sustainability factor is building a network. A good network enables the outspread of the project by including it to existing programs. It is also beneficial for the latter – it brings fresh content and new solutions – which also contributes to audience building and recruitment of new participants.

One of the interesting projects from this town is *Week of cultures* where you can get in touch with all of the aspects from the different cultures and ethnic groups present in the town.

### ***Interview 3***

The respondent in the third interview is an organizer of a cultural program for amateur arts and voluntary culture activities from a very small Slovenian town with a population of 4.000 people close to the Italian border. She is also the head of a north-western region in the national amateur cultural network. They are always pursuing a goal to include new participants in their existing programs. There is more than one children group for children with special educational needs or immigrant children etc. These groups are attending different art festivals (folklore dance festival, theatre festivals) where they have the same conditions as other children groups.

They worked a lot with programs for people with hearing problems (the local culture center is equipped with hearing aid technology; in some cases, they organize a sign interpreter to accompany their events).

Along with their regular activities, they are also developing new art workshop formats. They were included in the Culture Guides project in 2013. Within the project, they started two national pilot projects: the first involved people with drug addictions and the second focused on the blind and visually impaired people. Sand painting for the blind and visually impaired amateur artists is still running to this day (almost 10 years later). The secret to project sustainability is the network of stakeholders that is growing each year. In her opinion, the key factors are following the (potential) participants' interest and good communication with all the relevant parties. It is vital to know what kind of activities they are looking for and how to get them involved.

Cross-border projects with the Slovenian ethnic minority in Italy are also one of their success stories. In recent years, they were able to revive many cultural activities that had been shut down in the past.

### ***Interview 4***

The interviewee is the president of a regional society of blind and visually impaired individuals that focus on personal rehabilitation in your home (local environment). They advocate for active participation in regular activities in the hometown that are based in Slovenia's north-west.

The providers of activities who want to fully integrate blind and visually impaired people into their programs must be ready to meet some needs and make some adjustments. They find their mission in searching partner organizations and stakeholders. In the northern Primorska region, you can also find an institute that was established for designing and co-funding programs for differently abled participants. The role of the organization is to bring the know-how on how to make activities accessible for the blind population. They have already had success with creative writing workshops, film and movie making workshops, theatre workshops and productions. They are well recognized for the sand painting art workshops (they are one of the key stakeholders in the project already mentioned in interview 3). Sand painting also allows blind gallery visitors to feel the painting. It is a tactile artwork. Because

of their work, they were invited to the team that is tasked with preparing activities for the European Capital of Culture Nova Gorica 2025.

The interviewee estimates that the part of visually impaired who want to be actively creative correlates to the portion of people with the same drive in society as such. Co-creative activities where blind people work hand in hand with others are also a great learning experience for the rest of the group.

### ***Interview 5***

In Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, a humanitarian non-profit organization that strives to prevent homelessness and break down the social exclusion that homeless people face was established in 2005. The interviewee has a status of the informal leader of different activities within the organization: organization's magazine distribution run by homeless people (he also writes for the magazine), instalment of free books at bus stations and organizing a theater group for the homeless. At first, the theatre group collaborated with drama students (Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television). In recent years, however, they have started working with NGO theaters; last year the national theater SNG Drama joined in as well.

The project group consists of a creative mix of people with a range of different social and professional backgrounds. There are professional directors and performers working with homeless people or people with a history of alcohol and drug abuse. The doors are open to anyone, but the participants have to show a great deal of discipline – there is no way to do theatre otherwise. Each individual brings his or her stories and experience into the process. The collaboration in a project where they can have a meaningful input is what helps build trust. This kind of work also attracts new audiences. The interviewee feels the proudest when the line between the professional and amateur artist is blurred. The collaboration with established theater houses is a great motivation for participants. "Just mentioning the partners in the project works as a magic formula. Participants are more committed to the project."

The interviewee also brings up that you have to have experiences with how they work and think when working with the group of homeless. They can easily outsmart you with their street-smart life tricks and hacks.

### ***Interview 6***

In the last interview included in the baseline (the interviews are not in chronological order) the same set of questions was asked to a founder and one of the artistic leaders of a cultural and artistic association in the capital. They are working and developing the theatre of the oppressed. A Brazilian artist Augusto Boal created this method in the 1970s.

Theatre of the oppressed is a socially engaged form of theater in which non-actors (amateurs) are presenting social issues that were agreed on in the first stage of the process. They do not target specific vulnerable groups, but the relevant social topic brings in participants from the

whole spectrum. The topics range from gender inequality to problems related to asylum seeking, from bullying among teenagers to climate change-related injustices etc.

The maximum level of inclusivity is granted with a democratic vote on the future topic. They are building trust through giving time and space to everyone in the process to raise and express their opinion. This is also an opportunity to learn from each other. The final performance is a collective work by all the participants. "At the beginning of the process I tell the participants that I can teach them the method, but I cannot have the solution to all of their questions." One of the key elements of the method is that you act through and not just talk through the problem.

### **3. Focus group: Seek and you shall find**

The focus group happened online (Zoom conference call) and lasted for 90 minutes. Along with all three BOOST project members from JSKD, four respondents from the interviews participated in the focus group (Interviews 2, 3, 4 and 5). Three new participants were also present at the conference, one being the organizer of a cultural program for amateur arts and voluntary culture activities in Ljubljana's wider region (covering all the surrounding municipalities). She has long-standing experience working with the Roma ethnic minority. The second is an NGO theater producer responsible for youth projects that opened a theater group for youngsters who have never attended theater performances before. Their organization has also started the first group for elderly amateur actors in Ljubljana as part of their artistic residency programs for young professional artists. Two of the contributors are working in organizations that are not primarily working with amateur artists. One of them has even been included in the interviews (Interview 4) as a very important stakeholder for amateur arts and voluntary culture activities for their members (blind and visually impaired in the north-western Primorska region). The last project to join the debate is a group of law students who started giving free law advice (as legal first aid) during corona lockdowns. Since then, they have started a project that will help elderly people at a regional level understand some basic legal procedures. They are also looking to find ways to connect art forms with their work.

A brief introduction of the participants was followed by a moderated debate. The focus group concentrated on the two key elements based on the data from the interviews: different strategies to approach and to include new profiles of participants, and building the network of stakeholders around the program activities.

Everyone agreed on the importance of the role of other organizations that are already working with the target groups and are not focusing on the active participation in culture. These organizations can become important stakeholders in amateur arts programs. In any case, they are a great entry point for reaching the end users. Bringing new organizations and their know-how in the process does not resolve the organizers of cultural activities from knowing the specifics of working with new groups and individuals.

Research before the project should not focus on the methods, but rather on identifying the needs and interest on the potential participants' side. The project will be more successful if the activities they want to participate in are recognized and used as a starting point for the development of the project.

Flexibility within your own regular activities is sometimes more important than working on new models. Rethinking the existing programs can prove that there are only small changes needed for new groups and projects to join in.

#### **4. Observations and Final Recommendations**

- Make sure that you are making an “ecological” project. Is the project we are working on suitable for the environment we are working in? (We should avoid hyper-production of instant projects at any cost). Do we have a strategy to make this a sustainable project?
- There are no recipes in (amateur) art. Activities should open new questions and new dimensions for participants.
- Get to know and recognize the participant. Project success is heavily dependent on the participants' interest levels. It is the organizer's duty to detect the needs and follow up on them. It can just be that the next project will focus more on the democratic values than artistic skills. As an organizer, you should not get too fixated on certain solutions.
- Sometimes the thematic exposition speaks louder to certain groups of people than any focus campaign. The open discussion on social issues can bring new participants to the project.
- The final product can serve as self-realization for the participants and can be a huge motivating factor. But this only works if the process has a big enough role in the result.
- Build your network and be an active link for other organizations in your work environment. This will grant you access to new audiences and open possibilities for new co-operations.
- The best conditions are not always the right conditions. Find what works for different groups. Sometimes the formal environment can be discouraging, but in other cases the professional setting is a big added value for the participants.
- Do not exclude in the name of inclusion. Work on ways to make your regular activities more inclusive. Inventing projects in isolated environments can sometimes build an even bigger gap in social cohesion.

# The Danish Summary Report

By Kulturelle Samråd I Danmark (KSD)

(The national association of Cultural Councils in Denmark)

## 1. Preface

Kulturelle Samråd i Danmark, KSD has members in 44 of 98 municipalities in Denmark. The local cultural councils are umbrellas for the local arts and culture organisations in the municipality. Their task is first and foremost to be a political mouthpiece for the members vis-à-vis the municipality, but in addition the councils are also organisers of joint activities and initiatives such as courses, debates, etc.

As the associations in Denmark arise because they gather around a common interest - be it in amateur culture or as volunteers who gather to arrange professional theatre performances, art exhibitions, concerts, etc. You often do not think that there may be people who do not automatically register as participants. For many years, however, the associations have not been aware of it. But in recent years, however with a Ministry of Culture survey of the Danes' cultural habits and with a government on the left, it has become more and more clear that many associations are only interested in themselves and do not invite new members: children, young, old and marginalized. There is now interest in doing something about it.

As many of the cultural associations consist of older people, it has not been possible to make digital meetings. Instead, the questions are asked in an email correspondence and followed up on via the phone. This is not the optimum, but it is what is possible in a corona time.

## 2. Summary of the interviews

### *Interview 1*

The interviewee is chairman of the Cultural Council in the municipality of Køge. Køge municipality has 60,000 inhabitants. The cultural council of Køge has a membership of 40 associations, which corresponds to approx. 1600 active people within amateur art and voluntary culture. The activities are in the field of art and culture and they are defined by the members and are normally for the members only.

### **Activity and aim**

The national organisation, KSD, called for cultural councils that would participate in a pilot project on social inclusion. Køge signed up and selected focusing on involving marginalized children coming from families that do not have a tradition of participating in art and cultural activities in order to make them join the cultural life in the associations.

### **Method**



Cultural Council Køge first thought of finding some marginalised children in each class of the schools in the municipality, but it's difficult to take some pupils out of a class and not others. Therefore the Council chose to involve whole classes, even though some of the pupils spent time on culture outside of school.

Most of the activities are based on activities within local associations in order to reduce the distance between the actors and the children.

Type of activity	Social inclusion
An art society provided art exhibitions with a guided tour adapted to children, where artists became guest teachers and exhibition tour guides.	By targeting the tour to children, interest in the art is raised and at the exhibition with the children's paintings lots of parents and grandparents were joining.
A theatre association provided a theatre performance on bullying with a subsequent debate, as part of school integration/inclusion work.	By including a topic that is relevant to the children in the performance, it is made relevant to the pupils, who therefore became more involved and dared to ask questions in a subsequent session.
The School Orchestra provided a lecture on a school orchestra and its many and exciting activities, including how it is to play in the orchestra and how it develops interpersonal skills and camaraderie.	By letting children perform for children and subsequently initiating a dialogue between the two groups, the marginalized children felt that they could also be part of the orchestra.
The local Cultural Center provided a session on genealogy, where the children interviewed parents, grandparents and great-grandparents and found information on archives and the Internet.	As in the other activities, the goal here was to make the children feel as part of the activity and with their family involved, participating in a cultural heritage session will not be so foreign to it either.

## ***Interview 2***

The interviewee is a project worker from the National Association of Cultural Councils in Denmark and the Cultural Council Furesø north of Copenhagen. The municipality has 40.325 inhabitants. The Council has 51 member associations, each having an average 80 individual members. In all approximately 5.000 members. The activities are in the field of art and culture and they are defined by the members and are normally for the members only.

### **Activity and aim**

In cooperation with the national organization, KSD, Furesø Municipality's Youth Council and the Danish Red Cross, an activity to develop a mutual understanding between immigrant children and their parents and Danish children and their parents was started.

**Method**

As many of the immigrants did not speak Danish, the organisers had to find another way for the participants to communicate. They therefore selected music. However, the next hurdle was that many could not play any instrument, but this was solved by choosing drums that everyone could somehow gild themselves to. To make the session more meaningful, they chose to put two professional drum instructors, who had developed some methods for this very purpose, to lead the activities.

**Social inclusion**

Attention directed at the others. Listening to the other participants. Respect for the expressions of others. Democratic understanding. Interaction in the broadest sense – also by involving parents and children together. Nonverbal conversation. Shared joy.

***Interview 3***

The interviewee is chairman of the Cultural Council in the municipality of Aabenraa in the south of Denmark. The municipality has 16.425 inhabitants. The cultural council has a membership of 83 associations, which corresponds to approx. 4.000 active people within amateur and voluntary culture.

**Activity and aim**

In 2020 the council wanted to set up theatre activities for children and young people in all schools in the municipality where all children of school-age and children from all social layers should be included. The project was launched in April 2020. A digital meeting was held in September 2020 for all interested parties in the municipality under the leadership of anthropologist Tine Sønderby, who in her research works with the relationship between generations.

**Method**

Before the start of the activity the partners have been taught of the necessity of a positive attitude and acceptance of the others being different. So one must be alert and outreach and avoid misunderstandings.

**Social inclusion**

Developing opportunities to verbalize feelings, experiences and actions, creating understanding between children of each other's cultural backgrounds and developing tolerance in a social environment, which ultimately leads to a more democratic attitude.

***Interview 4***

The interviewee is the conductor Andreas Vetö, leader of the orchestra HOPE. In Denmark, it is mandatory for all municipalities to have a music school. The music school is for everyone,

but since the parents must pay for the lessons, there are children who do not have the opportunity to attend the school.

#### **Activity and aim**

The lack of opportunities for children from less affluent homes to get music education made the conductor Andreas Vetö angry, therefore he took the initiative to establish a music school orchestra for children – Danish/ethnic and immigrants - who for financial reasons could not otherwise attend. The purpose of the ensemble is - through empowerment and performance in music, song and dance - to give children and young people general education and life skills and to teach children and young people to become independent, conscientious citizens who have an impact not only on their own lives, but on the whole community and also thereby strengthen democratic understanding.

#### **Method**

HOPE must gather the energy around an orchestra, where all pupils participate and play an instrument. Very few of the participants have played on a musical instrument before, but already after a month the orchestra gives a concert at the school.

The general life competencies that the Music School focuses on include concentration skills, networking and motivation skills, ability to self-evaluate, ability to set goals, empathy, ability to collaborate and join a community, ability to create trust and self-confidence, ability to make decisions and have critical thinking, interpersonal communication skills.

#### **Social inclusion**

By participating in HOPE, children and young people learn to become independent, conscientious citizens who have a voice and who have an impact not only on their own lives, but on democracy and society as a whole.

### ***Interview 5***

The interviewee is chairman of the association Det Maritime Kalvø. The association is a mixture of a local history association, where volunteers gather historical knowledge about an area and a museum association, where volunteers run a small museum. The association is a member of the Cultural Council in Aabenraa and it is situated on an island called Kalvø. The island has been used for millennia, as evidenced by the many finds of burial mounds from the Viking Age and flint tools.

#### **Activity and aim**

Det Maritime Kalvø wants to reach out to vulnerable groups and individuals who - due to their social, economic or cultural background - are usually excluded from participating in cultural life.

#### **Method**

By means of specially organized activities and together with the organisation Save the Children, the association aims to attract participants (active/volunteers) with other social, economic or cultural backgrounds in their activities. Latest pensioners, children and immigrants.

### **Social inclusion**

By doing activities with Save the Children, the association has close contact with immigrants and children in financially disadvantaged families.

The association's challenges are to reach out to and include disadvantaged and potentially socially excluded groups.

Therefore, the association must:

- Have a positive attitude and acceptance that "you are different".
- Be attentive and outreach.
- Build mutual trust and recognition between different social, economic, age and cultural groups.

When asked what factors he believes need to be in place during the activities to make them successful in terms of being inclusive and accessible to excluded groups, the chairman answers: Understanding and acceptance.

When asked what way the activities contributed to building and strengthening democratic values, and what are the main factors for this to happen, the chairman replied: Openness, which was also the answer to the way the activities helped to build and strengthen democratic values.

### ***Interview 6***

The interviewee is Karen Grøn, director of the Art Museum Trapholt located in Kolding in western Denmark. Trapholt is a museum of modern art, crafts and design.

In the course of a year, the Trapholt Art Museum in Kolding has completed the dissemination project "Kulturens Kalejdoskop".

#### **Aim**

The motive for the project has been a desire to get new citizens from other countries to use the Danish art museums. The result is three exhibitions created by "new danes" from Kolding - a result that tells important stories from the lives of new danes in Denmark and at the same time shows new paths for the perception of what art can and should be used for.

#### **Method**

Three primary school teachers from Kolding with roots in Bosnia, Lebanon / Palestine and Greenland have been exploring Trapholt's art collection and found works that illustrate their lives in Denmark. Despite the three teachers' different cultural backgrounds, Trapholt's

paintings become a common starting point for their individual and collective stories about the journey to the new adorable country called Denmark. They come with other life experiences and other aesthetic experiences and have not grown up with the Danish cultural tradition.

Type of activity	Social inclusion
The new Danes have selected a number of works at the museum based on a self-chosen topic in relation to their cultural background. They combine the works in a new way, and it creates a new narrative about them and about their surroundings.	<p>Art has opened the new Danes' eyes to the fact that it can be interpreted in many ways and put into many different contexts.</p> <p>They were shown the diversity, but also the similarities when it comes to viewing a work of art.</p>

### 3. Summary of the focus group

The participants in the Danish focus group came from various national organisations within amateur culture and from the voluntary cultural area. That is, the following areas: Danish Art Associations. Here volunteers arrange professional art exhibitions, Danish Societies for Literature, where volunteers arrange readings and debate evenings with literary works. Cultural Centres in Denmark, where the volunteers help with initiation of cultural activities. Amateur Music Association which includes choirs and orchestras as well as Cultural Councils in Denmark, policy makers for the entire local cultural area.

Unfortunately, due to the corona restrictions, the meeting with the focus group could not be a joint meeting. Instead, questions were sent out by email to the individual focus group members, who then answered them. The answers were then compiled and sent to all who thus commented on the answers of the others.

### 4. The key findings

First all participants were asked what kind of social inclusion they or their member associations have worked with.

There is no greater focus in the organisations and often no focus at all on social inclusion, although of course the national organisations try to get as many as possible to participate in the activities. The reason is that those who participate in the local member associations participate for the sake of the content and do not think that there may be people who are excluded for various reasons.

Furthermore, the attitude is that if the organization is to focus on inclusion, it must be in the form of courses for the local associations, and this is not expected, there is no interest in this,

as the associations themselves define the content of the activities and prefer to spend time on the activity that is the core activity of the association.

The focus group responds, however, agree with the fact that engaging in arts and culture will help build mutual trust and recognition between different social groups and would be enriching, regardless of which social group one comes from, and they therefore found social inclusion important.

When asked what experiences the organisations have with what factors support and what factors hinder the building of mutual trust and recognition between different social, economic or cultural groups, the answer was that being isolated and not be able to take part in e.g. art and culture would be a hindrance.

When asked how the activities of the associations support mutual trust and social cohesion between people, the answer from the focus group was that since there was an agreement on a common goal, namely to give the participants the best artistic experience, there was also an explicit requirements in the activities that everyone trusted each other during the process and that everyone felt a sense of togetherness by having to achieve the same goal. This also in the way affected how the participants treated each other outside the activities.

When asked if the focus group believed that social inclusion also strengthened democratic values, everyone answered that when participating in artistic or cultural activities, all were important players and this helps to strengthen the belief in the democratic values.

# The Irish Summary Report

By Voluntary Arts Ireland

## 1. Frame of respondent contact

In the course of the baseline survey for the Erasmus+ project BOOST: Social Inclusion in Amateur and Voluntary Arts, six interviews and one focus group with representatives of cultural associations and organisations of participatory culture and an individual leader of creative cultural activity from different parts of Ireland were conducted between January and March 2021. The interviews took place digitally, via Zoom, with one interviewer from Voluntary Arts Ireland and one interviewee from each organization and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.

The Ireland focus group took place digitally, via Zoom, and lasted 1.5 hours. Six organisations/representatives participated and, after a short round of introductions, two members of the Voluntary Arts team briefly presented the project context and some learning to date from the individual interviews by way of helping people to tune into the conversation.

## 2. Interview Summaries

### *Interview 1*

Was conducted with a freelance musician/choir director who is also a part-time lecturer in a school of music. The discussion centred around the role of leading amateur choirs with a wide range of participants, musical styles, community connections and activities.

The interviewee reflected that most of the choir members he worked with were aged 30 and upwards. Younger age groups tend to be catered for in different ways.

The interviewee highlighted a number of things:

- A choir provides a place of belonging and also somewhere that you can feel secure and not exposed, as it is a shared activity – ‘everyone is in this together’. The goal is to create a ‘blended whole’ through everyone contributing at the same time and at their own level.
- This helps to build confidence, which encourages mutual support and helps to develop leaders. The interviewee told a story about two women who were initially nervous about being able to fit in who have now become group leaders and ambassadors.
- Understanding the motivations for people - which include learning and becoming better, and seeing a choir as an outlet for social interaction and often to combat isolation
- Having an open door policy is important. This encourages a level of diversity and counteracts worries about needing certain skills and experience. This extends to building trust, encouraging leadership and levels of democratic participation which

counter the perception of a choir as a dictatorship with the choir director making all the decisions.

- The main focus or priority of the choir is an important factor in determining level of inclusion. For example a choir can be a work choir or a church choir and the membership is limited by the diversity of that group. Equally, choirs can be set up to reach specific groups – for example, people living with cancer. The musical genre can also attract different people. It's important to consider what any choir is not for as well as what it is.
- Perhaps we should also think beyond the participants to encourage greater inclusion - for example, the audiences. Planning events so they are not always in the same places or amongst the same communities? Through festivals they are able to connect through core human values - a community coming together, eating, drinking and sharing an occasion.

## *Interview 2*

was conducted with two of the co-founders of a place-based creative network and cultural programme formed in 2020. The group aims to reach all local communities which include a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic groupings and generations. Nurturing creativity is clearly at its core and it has the support of the local authority, Voluntary Arts Ireland and others.

The interviewees reflected that amongst the committee members mutual trust and respect is very much in place. There is a sense of common purpose and people are working well together. They recognised that the committee, other than one member from the Egyptian community, is made up of white, middle class women. However, the influence of that member from the Egyptian community has been significant, leading specifically to the engagement of the local Egyptian community in the group's first project. There is a recognition too that this diversity has led to greater understanding and a wider range of ideas and connections.

One of the interviewees is intentionally working to reach all segments of the community and, as well as building an information base, is building relationships, recognising that personal relationships are very important in developing local links and participation across the community.

The interviewees highlighted a number of obstacles and challenges:

- People with personal agendas (especially those with influence). They are not always supportive of a more collective effort, which can lead to divides in the local community.
- Varying needs and the different ways of thinking and feeling of different socio-economic and ethnic groupings. Also, the associated perception that the work of the network is for one grouping and not the other – it is very difficult for the group to assess how they are seen by others. There is a lack of general awareness about this dynamic because it can be subtly expressed. Also a lack of understanding about how different people think and feel.



- Lack of community/civic structures to support understanding, relationships & inclusion.

The group recognises that encouraging participation across the different community divides is a real challenge – for different people to feel a part of things in particular. The committee works on democratic principles and members listen to and value what other people are saying. The desire to be inclusive across the community is also a democratic value. They need more time to assess how well they are extending democratic values across the community but it is a core aim.

It is perhaps one of the distinctive aspects of creative groups which have a focus on place that they are already thinking beyond a specific art form and are clearly looking to nurture cultural participation amongst everyone in the local community.

### ***Interview 3***

was conducted with a representative from an established world music/samba performance group with social inclusion approaches at its heart. The work of the group falls into internal workshops for its members and external workshops and performances in professional and community centres with a strong social aspect. The group is primarily supported through community services programmes and not arts funding.

The performance group itself has become a social network – including current and former members – so has built a lot of mutual trust over the years and created a bigger community. Lifelong bonds between people from a wide diversity of backgrounds have been established. The leadership of the group clearly supports this culture of solidarity. The group has strong links with the local neighbourhood and they are recognised as contributing to the social fabric of the area.

Like many organisations there are a number of challenges that act as obstacles to social inclusion work such as:

- capacity, being led a little like a one-man band and lacking the time and resources needed.
- availability of dependable physical space is also an issue – creativity and community engagement levels were much higher when the group had a permanent space.
- ability to use public and civic space which has been restricted in recent years has narrowed connection with communities.

The organisation is very proactive in relation to social inclusion and have found a range of ways to support it. They recently got support to translate publicity materials into a range of languages in order to increase accessibility and diversity. They have open sessions and beginners sessions whenever possible, often offering these free of charge. They help set up other Samba performing groups in local areas to help spread the practice and benefits.

The organisation is run on democratic principles. There are two performing members on the board of directors and the rest are from stakeholder groups. Group leader checks in with group members to ask for feedback on any potential decisions before acting on them. They

have developed a handbook to cover all aspects of this which includes a contract between group members and the organisation to confirm commitments to best practice and principles.

In addition, the organisation actively supports campaigns to empower marginalised groups through their work. The organisation leader hopes that band members become more aware of the needs of others through this work but always treads carefully in relation to which campaigns to get behind. The group is very diverse and so seeks involvement of everyone in any decisions made around this.

#### ***Interview 4***

was conducted by the leader of a membership organisation for youth orchestras across the island of Ireland with a specific focus on participative orchestral playing and young people. The organisation focuses on making the benefits of music-making more accessible.

Although the interviewee said that the organisation probably doesn't directly focus their work on social inclusion, the making of communal art in an orchestra supports it, enabling people to develop diverse relationships through making meaning together over time and in sustainable ways. The diversity of participation in orchestral music making on the island of Ireland is limited mostly by equity of access to it. Learning a musical instrument and taking part in orchestral music making is mostly made possible in Ireland by parents who can, therefore excluding many young people who would otherwise participate.

The social culture around the artform can also be a barrier when young people from different backgrounds become involved. They can excel at music making but not 'fit in' with the other young people which over time can erode their cultural identity.

A successful youth orchestra programme was set up in a school in Crumlin and when resistance to some aspects of the programme emerged with parents, a parents orchestra became the solution and it is now as successful as the youth orchestra with a broad spectrum of members. Part of this success story is a volunteer leader, who has decades of experience running youth orchestras and now, late in her life, has joined the orchestra as a late starter.

The youth orchestra association has moved towards seeing themselves as a youth work organisation. What matters to the organisation most now is the participation of young people for its own sake, for enjoyment, meaning and fulfilment. This has led to encouraging youth voices within their work and a greater understanding of democratic values.

Playing music helps people develop cognitively and the youth orchestra association seeks to enable people to develop independence within a group orchestral section in order to build their personal efficacy, which is vital to underpinning democratic values. It turns out that an orchestra is a very good place to develop this.

#### ***Interview 5***

was conducted with a project officer of a local community development organisation based in Donegal, directly working on the organisation's social inclusion and community activation

programme. The organisation works with a range of community groups across the area via a community development model using the arts.

Target groups are disadvantaged children and families, disadvantaged young people, disadvantaged women (this is a cross-cutting theme), rural isolation, lone parents, low income households, new communities, people with disabilities, Roma travellers, people disengaged in the labour market and the unemployed – so a very broad remit overall.

The approach to this work includes building partnerships with the county library, local council arts office and others, and works along the community development matrix which involves:

1. getting people involved – active participation
2. representation
3. networking within wider structures

In order to work with any group it is important to make it clear that the people participating are at the centre of the activity and process – the project officer is there to facilitate their needs and support them. One of the challenges is operating at arm's length – this can be very effective, however, it is possible more could sometimes be done by being more closely involved.

The community groups are usually geographically focussed and also issue-based, for example disability groups or women's issues groups. The interviewee then seeks to develop the groups along the community development matrix beyond just active participation, to represent their group in wider networks and structures, for example issue-based networks and the wider county-wide public participation network.

One group in a disadvantaged area started out with a community member who wanted to set up some drama classes. A couple of classes were organised and there was a great turn out. The most important aspect of getting things going was the local champions who had seeded the idea in the first place. The classes continued, but then added a fundraising idea for more activities in the local area and this led to a range of additional sessions. All activities led to a series of performances which helped raise the money needed to support the local community. There were some striking social benefits that came through the project activities, ranging from a former actor rekindling their passion to combating social isolation in the area. All of the social benefits happened without specifically classing it as a social impact project.

In order to enable people to find a voice and embed democratic principles, it is vital to create a safe space for people. The infrastructure provided by the local council is also very important.

### ***interview 6***

was conducted with the project coordinator of a socially engaged arts initiative (now 4 years in operation) engaging the residents of 13 housing estates in a town. The aim of the initiative is to make art in an open and inclusive way with the local community deciding what to do together.

The initiative is coordinated by an Arts Action Group, which is primarily made up of local residents and representatives of stakeholder organisations. There is a very broad mix of ethnicities and the area is also known for anti-social behaviour and drug use.

All programmes and activities are shaped by the voices of local residents and the project coordinator works hard to develop ideas with people and make sure that the project is truly inclusive. It can be hard to measure the effects of this approach, although there is a very strong community spirit and people have a great deal of civic pride. People know all the problems that exist – some externally driven, some self-inflicted – but they are fiercely protective of the area.

Activities led by the project do build on this sense of civic pride and because there is no centre or building base for the project, activities happen all across the community which helps reach a wider range of people and enables the project to remain visible, connected and flexible to meet differing needs. The other key aspect of the approach which helps to build cohesion and inclusion, is to offer people activities to respond to, get involved in and lead.

The interviewee mentioned a number of barriers:

- There is still work to do to help people see that art making is for everyone
- Negative perception of the place and what goes on there
- Sometimes the community gets in the way of itself

The democratic values that the project champions are listening, opening out a space for people to have a voice, asking questions and making offers rather than dictating terms, and finding a structure that supports people. The additional democratic value that is implicit in the name of the steering group is action. Through this, and the growing of people's confidence, the project has led to the people of the area becoming the experts and champions.

The interviewee also reflected on the reciprocal nature of the relationship with local residents and how that helps to make this kind of creative and civic project work. People want to feel that they have something to offer that will be valued and they also want to see that there will be something in return. So, it is not enough for any creative project to be just a nice 'art thing'.

### **3. Focus Group Summary**

The participants of this focus group included five of the six interviewees and an additional cultural organisation, a national agency for socially-engaged art across the Republic of Ireland. The open conversation was informed by the interviews and framed around three questions:

1. What is it that you value about bringing diverse people together through creative and cultural activities? Why is it important?
2. How do you overcome the challenges of engaging people across different backgrounds and with differing needs?

3. What tools, resources or supports would help you most as you develop this aspect of your work?

Bringing people together to do something alongside each other enables barriers to understanding and connection to be broken down. The value of creative activities is that arts is the hook, the carrot and common interest that attracts people from different backgrounds. It is the motivation, not the idea of social inclusion itself, in fact it speeds up connection if anything. The arts is also a very open platform that can host or be applied to a wide range of social issues.

Participatory decision making is just as important as art making. If more people are able to have a voice in the decisions around activities that will be a part of their lives, then the activities are more likely to be relevant to these people and encourage a greater diversity of participation.

One challenge that was talked about was that people should have access to art making because it is good for them as individuals, rather than only as a tool leading to community development. The discussion led to the idea that the intrinsic and instrumental benefits of the arts are inevitably connected. It could be said that the benefits of arts participation begin at the individual level. As previously said, people are motivated to get involved because they believe it will be good for them personally, however, once they do, the benefits to them begin to spill over into wider society. This natural dynamic simultaneously includes both perspectives.

When seeking to engage people, especially those that might have a number of challenges in participating, we need to bring the activity into their lives, rather than expecting them to come to us. There was recognition here too, that time was needed for understanding and relationships to be built and to be consistent in making things happen so that trust can begin to develop.

If we accept that it is a fundamental human right to participate in creative cultural activity then it is the duty of those of us who are encouraging others to get involved to make these activities properly accessible. One of the challenges for organisations is that resourcing often doesn't allow enough time for processes to sufficiently develop. Nor does it provide enough space for reflection around risk and failure, which is inevitably a part of these activities.

It was felt that it may be possible to describe shared processes and common outcomes for developing social inclusion through cultural activities in a way that could articulate a flexible framework that gave people principles to be guided by rather than a rigid set of rules.

## **4. Observations and Final Recommendations**

### ***4.1 Our Motivations Matter***

It is true to say that creative cultural activity provides a distinctively effective way to bring people together in ways that are open, safe and fun. However, the motivations for people from diverse backgrounds to get involved are many and various. Understanding these motivations

is a key aspect of supporting more socially inclusive approaches. Motivations referenced include:

- A common interest in a specific artform – with the personal motivations of learning new skills, socialising and enjoyment in the moment which helps you feel good about yourself
- A desire to contribute to your community through a sense of civic pride and solidarity with the associated need for reciprocal benefits to be returned on an individual basis
- Belonging and being a part of something that enables you to make meaning with others.

Within these broader ideas, the way different people and cultural groupings think and feel will affect how they express these motivations. What seems abundantly clear is that the pathway into activities, for most, will not be ‘social inclusion’ but getting involved in a creative activity.

#### ***4.2 Participatory decision making as well as art making***

All of the organisations involved in this survey, and indeed more generally across the island of Ireland, have highly developed practices around participatory art making. What is less established is the fundamental idea of involving people in the decision making around activities. This was seen by our respondents as a key requirement for developing social inclusion. Approaches that are used by these organisations include:

- Providing ‘enabling’ leadership – encouraging participant voice throughout activities and projects
- Supporting committees or action groups led by the people involved in any initiative, empowering them to make decisions and take independent action
- Encourage the development of leaders from within communities
- Create communication and feedback loops in which a temperature check amongst community members can be taken before key decisions are finalised

#### ***4.3 Rights and Equality***

If we accept that being able to express yourself creatively and with others is a fundamental human right then we must provide equitable access to the means of participation in ways that participants value. Wrapped up in this is the democratic right of having agency over the things that matter to you, which in turn affects your wellbeing. From this perspective, perhaps the bigger issue we may be facing is equality. One key approach to dealing with this issue articulated here is to bring the creative activities into the lives and life patterns of people, rather than expecting them to come to us. Perhaps counter intuitively, initiatives that didn’t have a physical centre, but happened across community settings, were useful. Counterbalancing that, for some organisations, having a permanent space established greater community buy-in over time.

#### ***4.4 Resources Matter***

The primary resource that makes a material difference in developing sustainable, socially inclusive approaches is time. Time to listen, time to understand, time to build relationships of trust, time to develop credibility in a community, time to reflect and improve, time to fail and learn from failures. This is dependent on having the available financial resources to stay the course. It is affected by short-term funding and by the culture of risk aversion and linear approaches to project development which demand the mapping out of tangible outcomes in advance, without flexibility for people to shape plans through fluid and organic processes.

#### ***4.5 Acting within complexity***

One of our key findings is the power of collective action, of doing something useful together. The engine that drives change, towards more social inclusion and equity, is finding common purpose through action. The organisations involved in this survey also recognised that they were acting within complex settings, with multiple issues, cultural backgrounds and external circumstances. One of the key capabilities that people coordinating initiatives need is the ability to encourage transformation within a diverse human system and a dominant political and economic narrative that often resists progress.

#### ***4.5 A Flexible Framework – some questions***

Is it possible to describe shared processes and common outcomes for developing social inclusion through creative cultural activity? Could a flexible framework give people indications or principles to be guided by? What should those indications or principles be? For example:

- amount of time spent listening
- building relationships
- participatory decision making
- finding common purpose in order to inspire people to get involved

## 3. Key findings and recommendations

### 3.1 Key findings

By Interfolk, Institut for Civilsamfund  
(Interfolk, Institute for Civil Society)

#### Introduction

The five national surveys differ in several ways, both by involving different types of respondent groups in the interviews and focus groups, by having a varied focus on the three societal benefits – “social inclusion”, “social cohesion”, and “active citizenship”, and by outlining different findings of key points that will have an important influence on the societal benefits of the activities (the added community values).

These differences can make it more difficult to compare and order the findings in the same framework, but on the other hand the more open approach also helps to disclose more possible findings, which can be used for the planned transnational framework of key points that influence the societal benefits.

#### Summaries of the national findings

The following summaries of the national surveys seek to order the key findings by focussing on the following four areas:

- The profile of learning providers that participated as respondents in the interviews and focus groups, because it may influence the perspectives that they bring to the findings and recommendations.
- Highlights/ frequently mentioned points from the interviews, which can be important for promoting the societal benefits (added community values).
- Highlights/ frequently mentioned points in the focus groups, which will influence the quality and degree of added societal benefits.
- The key points in the concluding outline of findings of the national surveys, to order the findings in relation to the three defined societal benefits: Social inclusion, social cohesion and democratic values.

These national lists of points that influence the societal benefits are merged in the concluding transnational framework of key points that is presented in the concluding part of this section 3.1: Key findings.

#### *The Austrian survey*

The Austrian survey outlines 7 key findings, and all points refer to “social inclusion”, while three of the points also refer to “social cohesion”, and one of the points also refers to “active



citizenship". It is a special feature of the Austrian survey that some of the findings include parts of all three societal benefits, and it seems that separate categorical distinctions can be difficult to maintain in the examined practices.

### **Interviews**

The six Austrian interviews present examples of amateur arts activities that target mainly varied types of minority groups, such as

1. Theatre activities for multicultural students, people with disabilities, people with migration experience, among others.
2. Arts studio activities for people with cognitive disabilities.
3. A cultural house/centre that provides space for collaboration and affordable cultural events, including many participatory events such as poetry slams, open mics, and story nights, among others.
4. A cultural association that offers a longer-term access card to different art and cultural activities for socio-economically disadvantaged people.
5. An organisation providing people with migrant and refugee backgrounds a broad range of activities including German classes, a German language café, dance projects, photography projects and exhibits, festivals, and more.
6. Decentralised cultural centres in Vienna, which are integrated into a large social-caritative institution in Austria, that offers functions as events, educational and cultural space to audiences from their own neighbourhood, which has less access to art and cultural offers.

### **Highlights/ frequently mentioned points from interviews**

1. Long term and consistent offer
2. Using public performances or exhibits as a means to create recognition and cohesion between different groups
3. Including participants in the creation/ organization of programs (co-creation)
4. Having a diverse team
5. Utilizing networks and connections in order to reach target group

### **Focus group**

The Austrian focus group involved respondents from cultural organizations and initiatives from across urban and rural Austria, which worked both for minority groups and majority groups.

- Most respondents did focus on participatory events and activities, to avoid a "paternalistic relationship between the organization and target group."
- The respondents agreed that participation and co-creation in the development of activities is an essential point for being more inclusive.
- Several respondents also laid emphasis on the consistent reflection required within the organization to reach standards of diversity and accountability. Building trust and social cohesion between different groups was a difficulty many organizations faced.

## Key findings

The concluding section with observations and recommendations outlined the following seven (eight) points that all refer to social inclusion, and some of them also at the same time have references to social cohesion and democratic values.

### *Social inclusion:*

1. Adequate time and fitting location are necessary conditions for working inclusively. For many target groups events must be long term, regularly and at places, where different groups can find together, in order to build social cohesion between groups.
2. “Participation and co-creation instead of pure consumption” will help to get better knowledge of and contact to the marginalised. Not only should events themselves be participatory, but planning should be as well.
3. Low-threshold access can be seen not only in pricing, content, atmosphere, and location, but also in communication and language.
4. Networking diverse social groups and building a sustainable connection between them in order to promote inclusiveness. It is necessary to work directly with organizations that focus on your target group in order to have an entry point to working with that group, as well as knowledge about their needs.
5. Innovative digital strategies are increasingly used to reach a larger target audience, where social media and digitalisation can provide more reach,
6. Improve funding and cooperation at the interface between the cultural and social sector.
7. Secure diversity in the team of the culture organisations to get and signal more authenticity.
- 7a. Secure a consistent reflection in the organisations on their quality of inclusive work. not only in the activities but also in organizational structures and attitudes.

### *Social Cohesion*

- 1a. Events must be long term, regularly and at places, where different groups can find together, in order to build social cohesion between groups.
- 2a. “Participation and co-creation instead of pure consumption” will help to promote mutual recognition and cohesion. Not only should events themselves be participatory, but planning should be as well.
- 4a. Networking diverse social groups and building a sustainable connection and mutual recognition promote cohesion.

### *Active citizenship:*

- 2b. “Participation and co-creation instead of consumption” refers not only to promoting inclusive contact to marginalised and cohesion between different social groups, but also to “active citizenship”, because “co-creation” encourages active participation and decision making rather than passive consumption. Further, many organizations implement democratic decision making within their teams, as well as among participants.

## **Summary**

The Austrian report shows that a clear distinction between social inclusion, social cohesion and active citizenship is often not possible in practice. Practitioners are implementing activities in ways that may refer to all three benefits but are not aiming at them explicitly. Social cohesion results in a certain way from social inclusion, which in turn is conditioned by active citizenship, or vice versa. A clear separation is therefore not practical on the basis of the Austrian survey results.

## ***The Polish survey***

The Polish survey engaged learning providers working with activities for all citizens with an interest in the topics and not especially working with minority groups or vulnerable groups with special needs. Nonetheless, 5 of the 6 mentioned key findings referred to different forms of “social inclusion”, while the last 6<sup>th</sup> finding referred to “active citizenship”.

## **Interviews**

The six Polish interviews present examples of amateur arts activities that target mainly marginalised groups, such as

1. In a small village to provide educational, cultural, local heritage activities for the whole community and its varied groups of citizens.
2. In a medium city to ensure multilateral, diverse support for the people in need.
3. A choir association in a small town engages men and women, of various ages from various social groups and they target varied groups of audiences.
4. A young association of designers and craftspeople organises exhibitions, who take part in craft fairs, debates and discussions concerning the role of crafts and related subjects.
5. An organisation provides musical workshops open for all interested run by recognised musicians, and organises concerts of ‘alternative’ Polish music.
6. A foundation active in a little village provides heritage activities for more varied groups with the aim to strengthen the local community.

## **Highlights/ frequently mentioned points from interviews**

1. Courage and consistency/ regularity in action
2. Listening to the target group’s needs and involving them (co-creation)
3. Creating sustainable programming
4. Networking and building connections with relevant groups
5. Being flexible with planning and organizing in order to meet needs of target group

## **Focus group**

The focus group had five respondents. Three of them were also participating in the previous, individual interviews; two people were new. All the interviewees were women.

- All respondents mentioned that the societal benefits of their activities gave varied organisational benefits such as improved reputation, boost in creativity, good relations in local communities, material benefits as better localities, more support.
- On the other side, the priority of inclusive activities for marginalised groups implies extra challenges with being flexible, more availability for talks and listening to special needs, higher demands to the venues and resources, and often more reluctance to be involved in civic activities as volunteers.
- A motivating factor could be to gain improved relations to important stakeholders and to get better access to decision makers and other resources.
- The key recommendations for working more inclusively were: To have shared passions, the 'community workers' talents shall be cherished and more supported, be open for the needs of the community members, to secure the needed localities, equipment and resources.

### **Key findings**

The concluding section with observations and recommendations outlined the following six points:

#### *Social inclusion:*

1. The effect is equally important as the process, also for vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. Because of this, the sustainability of the organization is also important.
2. Importance of cooperation with 'supporting' stakeholders in the social field, when intending to reach vulnerable groups.
3. Find role models / new competences in the organisations that can open up to include the vulnerable. The importance of flexibility was emphasized in holding and planning events.
4. Be aware of different needs among members (that not have the same interest in widening up) as the performers (that wish to have as big an audience group as possible)
5. The context the organisation works in defines the best practices of activities – so knowledge and interest for the specific context is important to reach out

#### *Active citizenship*

6. The learning of being active can be transformed to wider interest in democratic influence. Overall democratic behaviours were increased on the individual level, but there was little overall group effect noted.

### **Summary**

The interviews in the Polish survey had a wide focus both on social inclusion, social cohesion, and active citizenship, but the concluding key findings had a narrower focus. It outlines 6 points, and 5 points refer to different forms of "social inclusion" of vulnerable groups in the activities of the organisations in the cross-cultural civil society sector; while the last 6<sup>th</sup> point

refers to how joint activities can be transformed to a wider interest in democratic influence. The key findings do not mention points about “social cohesion”, even though it was an issue both in the interviews and the focus group.

### ***The Slovenian survey***

The Slovenian survey engaged respondents working with social marginalised and it had the main focus on social inclusion, but 7 out of the 8 key findings had in my point of view mainly focus on general aspects of organisational development and project quality, while 1 finding referred more specific to “social cohesion”.

### **Interviews**

The six Slovenian interviews present examples on amateur arts activities that targets varied marginalised groups, such as

1. Performative arts for elderly women.
2. Activities for refugees including art therapy for children coming from war zones.
3. Arts activities for varied vulnerable groups like children with special educational needs, immigrant children, people with hearing problems, people with drug addictions, blind and visually impaired people.
4. Activities to integrate blind and visually impaired people with sand painting art workshops and other tactile artwork.
5. Arts offering for homeless people or people with a history of alcohol and drug abuse;
6. Theatre of the oppressed that not targets specific vulnerable groups, but the relevant social topic from gender inequality to problems related to asylum seeking, from bullying among teenagers to climate change-related injustices etc.

### **Highlights/ frequently mentioned points from interviews**

1. Networking and connections with organizations with similar target groups.
2. Involving participants in the planning and holding of events (co-creation).
  - a. Gathering feedback from participants for future events.
3. Performances leading to recognition and cohesion between different social groups.
4. Low cost can be important for involving people with low SES.

### **Focus group**

The focus group involved respondents working with different aspects of social inclusion, and seemed to have the main focus on varied forms of multilateral and synergetic cooperation between the represented fields of social inclusion.

### **Key findings**

The concluding Slovenian section with observations and recommendations outlined the following eight observations, which mainly refer to general aspects of organisational development and project quality.

*Organisational quality assurance:*

1. Promote “ecological” projects, so our activities are suitable for the environment we are working in.
2. Avoid recipes beforehand in (amateur) art, so the activities can open new questions and new dimensions for the participants. This flexibility is essential for meeting changing needs of target groups.
3. Get to know and recognize the interest levels of the participant, before you plan activities.
4. Use thematic exposition to specific target groups, with an open approach to social issues, which better can attract new participants to the project. Listen to the needs and interests of target groups and incorporate them into planning.
5. Understand that both result and process is important in participatory arts activities.
6. Build open networks and active links for other organizations in your work environment to improve your access to new audiences and open possibilities for new co-operations.
7. The best conditions are not always the right conditions. Find what works for different groups.

*Social cohesion*

8. Do not exclude in the name of inclusion. Inventing projects in isolated environments can sometimes build an even bigger gap in social cohesion.

**Summary**

The 8 key findings are all important and relevant for organisational development and project quality, and they will thereby probably also influence the three societal benefits mentioned in the Guidelines, but apart from the last 8<sup>th</sup> point they are so general that it is difficult to detect specific pre-conditions, success factors and main obstacles for best practice in dealing with either social inclusion, social cohesion or promotion of democratic values.

***The Danish survey***

The Danish survey engaged mainly learning providers working with marginalised social groups. It outlines 4 key findings, where 1 refers to social inclusion, 2 to social cohesion, and 1 to active citizenship and democracy:

**Interviews**

The six Danish interviews present examples on cross-cultural activities for a variety of marginalised target groups, such as

1. Arts and heritage activities for children coming from families that do not have a tradition of participating in art and cultural activities.
2. Music activities for immigrant families that did not speak Danish.
3. Theatre for children and young people from all social layers.
4. Orchestra playing for children from less affluent homes.
5. Heritage activities for groups and individuals, who due to their social, economic or cultural background have barriers for active participation.

6. New Danes collect and create three arts exhibitions in cooperation with a public arts museum.

#### **Highlights/ frequently mentioned points from interviews**

1. There must be a positive attitude and willingness for accepting other social groups.
2. Inclusive work sometimes demands seeking out a marginalized target group which is usually excluded.
3. Democratic values can be strengthened through art.

#### **Focus group**

The Danish focus group involved respondents from national associations in the area of amateur arts and voluntary culture, and they were asked about what factors support and what factors hinder respectively “social inclusion”, “social cohesion” and “active citizenship and democracy”.

#### **Key findings**

The concluding section with observations and recommendations, outlined 4 key findings, where 1 refers to social inclusion, 2 to social cohesion, and 1 to active citizenship:

##### *Social inclusion:*

1. Obstacle – when the members in the local associations participate only for the sake of the content and do not consider challenges for vulnerable people to participate.

##### *Social cohesion:*

2. Success factor – sharing mutual arts and culture activities will help build mutual trust and recognition between different social groups.
3. Success factor – sharing artistic experiences, where everyone feels a sense of togetherness by sharing the same goal, and everyone trusted each other during the process.

##### *Active citizenship:*

4. Success factor - participate in artistic or cultural activities, where all are important and have a say in the planning, which helps to strengthen the belief in democratic values. Giving participants decision making power and creative freedom also helps strengthen these values through practice.

#### **Summary**

The learning providers in the interviews mainly represented varied forms of social inclusive activities for minority groups, while the learning providers in the focus groups came from national organisations that worked with activities for majority groups or “normal Danish” participants in the cross-cultural associations. They were “representative” learning providers from the sector– as it also was expected in the Survey Guidelines. The lead questions and discussions in the interviews and in the focus group had a balanced focus on the three key societal benefits listed in the Survey Guidelines.

### ***The Irish survey***

The Irish survey outlines 6 key findings, where 2 refers to social cohesion, 2 to active citizenship, and 1 to social inclusion; and 1 interestingly furthermore refers to a transverse societal benefit.

### **Interviews**

The six Irish interviews present examples of cross-cultural activities for a variety of arts and culture groups and contexts, such as

1. Amateur choirs with a wide range of participants, musical styles, community connections.
2. A place-based creative network and cultural hub reaching out to all local communities which include a wide range of ethnic and socio-economic groupings and generations.
3. An established world music/samba performance group providing internal workshops for its members and external workshops and performances in professional and community centres with a strong social aspect.
4. A membership organisation for youth orchestras across the island of Ireland with a specific focus on participative orchestral playing and young people.
5. A local community development organisation directly working with social inclusion and community activation programmes.
6. A socially engaged arts initiative based in a hard to reach and very diverse community, in a town area with a very broad mix of ethnicities and an area also known for anti-social behaviour and drug use.

### **Highlights/ frequently mentioned points from the interviews**

1. Democratic decision making in the arts strengthens these values.
2. Having a diverse team helps reach diverse target groups.
3. Connections to the local community are vital.
4. Having materials in multiple languages can aid the inclusive work.

### **Focus group**

The participants of the focus group included five of the six interviewees and a representative of an additional cultural organisation, a national agency for socially engaged art across the Republic of Ireland. The open conversation was guided by three lead questions:

- What is it that you value about bringing diverse people together through creative and cultural activities? Why is it important?
- How do you overcome the challenges of engaging people across different backgrounds and with differing needs?
- What tools, resources or supports would help you most as you develop this aspect of your work?

These lead questions focused mainly on “social cohesion”, but during the discussions the other aspects of societal benefits like “social inclusion” and “active citizenship” were also covered.



## Key findings

The concluding section with observations and recommendations, outlines 6 key findings, where 2 refers to social cohesion, 2 to active citizenship, and 1 to social inclusion; and 1 interestingly furthermore refers to transverse societal benefits that merges cohesion, inclusion and democratic participation.

### *Social cohesion:*

1. Creative cultural activity provides a distinctively effective way to bring people together in ways that are open, safe and fun, and give a sense of belonging and being a part of something that enables you to make meaning with others.
2. The primary resource that makes a material difference in developing long term and sustainable socially inclusive approaches is time - to listen, to understand, to build relationships of trust, to develop credibility in a community, to reflect and improve, Inevitably, this is wrapped up in having the available financial resources to stay the course and is affected very much by short term cycles of funding and planning. This also affects the space where the events can take place, which is also essential for consistent events.

### *Active citizenship:*

3. Most voluntary arts organisations in Ireland have highly developed practices around participatory art making; while it is less established to involve people in the decision making around creative activities, and thereby provide democratic learning processes.
4. To express yourself creatively and with others is a fundamental human right, and therefore one of the key duties of cultural organisations is to provide equitable access to the means of participation in ways that participants value. Wrapped up in this human right is the fundamental democratic right of having agency over the things that matter to you.

### *Social inclusion:*

5. The motivations for people from diverse backgrounds to get involved are many and various. Understanding these motivations is a key aspect of supporting more socially inclusive approaches.

### *Transverse societal benefit – engaging all three aspects at the same time*

6. The power of participatory arts implies collective action, of doing something useful together. The engine that drives change, towards more social inclusion and equity, active citizenship, and cohesion, is finding common purpose through action – whether it be playing in an orchestra or putting on a community-wide creative activity

## Summary

The learning providers in the interviews and the focus group represented both organisations that reach out to minority groups as well as more “mainstream” culture associations that reach out to the majority of Irish people with an interest in the arts or heritage topic, which the organisations work with. The lead questions and discussions in the interviews and in the

focus group had a balanced focus on the three key societal benefits listed in the Survey Guidelines, and it also more consciously explored the transverse interrelations between the three societal benefits.

## **Outlines of transnational highlights and key findings**

Here we merge first the frequently mentioned highlights from the interviews, and secondly the outlined key findings from the national surveys.

### ***Transnational highlights from the interviews***

Points that strengthen societal benefits

1. Creating sustainable programming with consistency/ regularity of activities
2. Using public performances or exhibits as a means to create recognition and cohesion between different social groups,
3. Listening to the target group's needs and involving them the creation/ planning, organization and holding of events and activities (co-creation)
4. Democratic decision making in the arts strengthens these values.
5. Democratic values can be strengthened through participatory and co-creative art.
6. Having a diverse team helps reach diverse target groups.
7. Utilizing networks, building connections with relevant groups in order to reach similar target group
8. Being flexible with planning and organizing in order to meet the needs of varied target groups.
9. Gathering feedback from participants for future events.
10. Connections to the local community are vital.
11. Having materials in multiple languages can aid the inclusive work.
12. Low cost of activities can be important for involving people with low SES (socio-economic status)
13. There must be a positive attitude and willingness for accepting other social groups.
14. Inclusive work sometimes demands seeking out a marginalized target group which is usually excluded.

### ***Transnational key findings from the surveys***

*Social inclusion:*

1. Adequate time and fitting location are necessary conditions for working inclusively. For many target groups events must be long term, regularly and at places, where different groups can find together, in order to build social cohesion between groups.
2. "Participation and co-creation instead of pure consumption" will help to get better knowledge of and contact to the marginalised. Not only should events themselves be participatory, but planning should be as well.

3. Low-threshold access can be seen not only in pricing, content, atmosphere, and location, but also in communication and language.
7. Importance of cooperation with 'supporting' stakeholders in the social field, when intending to reach vulnerable groups, in order to have an entry point to working with that group, as well as knowledge about their needs.
8. Improve funding and cooperation at the interface between the cultural and social sector.
9. The motivations for people from diverse backgrounds to get involved are many and
10. various. Understanding these motivations is a key aspect of supporting more socially inclusive approaches.
11. Innovative digital strategies are increasingly used to reach a larger target audience, where social media and digitalisation can provide more reach,
12. Secure diversity in the team of the culture organisations to get and signal more authenticity and inclusiveness. Find role models / new competences in the organisations that can open up to include the vulnerable.
13. Secure a consistent reflection in the organisations on their quality of inclusive work. not only in the activities but also in organizational structures and attitudes.
14. The context the organisation works in defines the best practices of activities – so knowledge and interest for the specific context is important to reach out
15. Be aware of different needs among members (that not have the same interest in widening up) as the performers (that wish to have as big an audience group as possible)
16. The effect is equally important as the process, also for vulnerable groups and people with disabilities. Because of this, the sustainability of the organization is also important.
17. Obstacle – when the members in the local associations participate only for the sake of the content and do not consider challenges for vulnerable people to participate.

### *Social Cohesion*

1. Creative cultural activity provides a distinctively effective way to bring people together in ways that are open, safe and fun, and give sense of belonging and being a part of something that enables you to make meaning with others.
2. The primary resource that makes a material difference in developing long term and sustainable socially inclusive approaches is time.- to listen, to understand, to build relationships of trust, to develop credibility in a community, to reflect and improve, Inevitably, this is wrapped up in having the available financial resources to stay the course and is affected very much by short term cycles of funding and planning.
3. Events must be long term, regularly and at places, where different groups can find together, in order to build social cohesion between groups.
4. "Participation and co-creation instead of pure consumption" will help to promote mutual recognition and cohesion. Not only should events themselves be participatory, but planning should be as well.

5. Success factor – sharing artistic experiences, where everyone feels a sense of togetherness by sharing the same goal, and everyone trusted each other during the process Networking diverse social groups and building a sustainable connection and mutual recognition promote cohesion.
6. Success factor – sharing mutual arts and culture activities will help build mutual trust and recognition between different social groups.
7. Do not exclude in the name of inclusion. Inventing projects in isolated environments can sometimes build an even bigger gap in social cohesion.

*Active citizenship:*

1. To express yourself creatively and with others is a fundamental human right, and therefore one of the key duties of cultural organisations is to provide equitable access to the means of participation in ways that participants value. Wrapped up in this human right is the fundamental democratic right of having agency over the things that matter to you.
2. Most voluntary arts organisations in Ireland have highly developed practices around participatory art making; while it is less established to involve people in the decision making around creative activities, and thereby provide democratic learning processes.
3. “Participation and co-creation instead of consumption” refers not only to promoting inclusive contact to marginalised and cohesion between different social groups, but also to “active citizenship”, because “co-creation” encourages active participation and decision making rather than passive consumption. Further, many organizations implement democratic decision making within their teams, as well as among participants.
4. Success factor - participate in artistic or cultural activities, where all are important and have a say in the planning, which helps to strengthen the belief in democratic values. Giving participants decision making power and creative freedom also helps strengthen these values through practice.
5. The learning of being active can be transformed to wider interest in democratic influence. Overall democratic behaviours were increased on the individual level, but there was little overall group effect noted.

*Transverse societal benefit – engaging all three aspects at the same time*

1. The power of participatory arts implies collective action, of doing something useful together. The engine that drives change, towards more social inclusion and equity, active citizenship, and cohesion, is finding common purpose through action – whether it be playing in an orchestra or putting on a community-wide creative activity

*Organisational quality assurance:*

1. Promote “ecological” projects, so our activities are suitable for the environment we are working in.

2. Avoid recipes beforehand in (amateur) art, so the activities can open new questions and new dimensions for the participants. This flexibility is essential for meeting changing needs of target groups.
3. Get to know and recognize the interest levels of the participant, before you plan activities.
4. Use thematic exposition to specific target groups, with an open approach to social issues, which better can attract new participants to the project. Listen to the needs and interests of target groups and incorporate them into planning.
5. Understand that both result and process is important in participatory arts activities.
6. Build open networks and active links for other organizations in your work environment to improve your access to new audiences and open possibilities for new co-operations.
7. The best conditions are not always the right conditions. Find what works for different groups.

## **Methodological challenges**

The completed series of national surveys may have some methodological challenges due to:

- a. The engagement of respondents, who mainly come from associations working with vulnerable or marginalised social groups, and thereby from a minority area in the huge cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage.
- b. A main focus on varied aspects of promoting social inclusion, while the other societal benefits of social cohesion and democratic values seem to have less focus in the interviews and focus groups.
- c. The existence of transverse societal benefits, where the different categories of inclusion, cohesion and democracy are merged, and it seems difficult or impossible to make clear distinctions and classification of the different societal benefits / added community values.
- d. The possible unclear borders between core services in the field of arts and culture and the added societal benefits, which can imply that the Benchmarking Tool can be interpreted as trying to benchmark the arts-related core values instead of the added societal values.

### ***A. Secure representative respondents!***

In general, most of the learning providers engaged in the national surveys worked in associations with focus on cultural activities for marginalised and vulnerable groups of people.

This was the case both for the interviewed learning providers in the Austrian survey, the Slovenian survey, and the Danish survey; while the learning providers in the Polish survey provided activities for all citizens with an interest in their topics, and the Irish survey engaged

learning providers from both organisations that reach out to minority groups as well as more “mainstream” culture associations that reach out to the majority of Irish people.

Hereby three of the surveys mainly gained information from people working in minority areas of the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage, and not from learning providers working in the majority of “mainstream” participatory arts, culture and heritage associations that engage a much higher percentage of the population and thereby all equal have a higher impact on the societal development in the partner countries.

It may not necessarily be a methodological weakness of the key findings, because the respondents working in “minority areas” may have a clearer insight in general challenges for providing the added community values of inclusion, cohesion and democracy, but there may be a risk that the key findings can have a too limited reference and thus the recommendations may also be too narrow to indicate the needed fix points for good practice in the overall cross-cultural sector.

Or rather, the surveys may disclose important aspects of pre-conditions, obstacles and success factors, but these findings may need to be cleared of possible bias, before they appropriately can guide the design of a Benchmarking Tool for the whole cross-cultural civil society sector.

### ***B. Secure a balanced focus on all three benefits!***

In general, the final key findings of the surveys were dominated by points about social inclusion with fewer feeds about social cohesion and democratic values.

This imbalance of results tends to be the case, where the respondent groups represented organisations that mainly work with social inclusion of minority groups. The imbalance was probably caused by engaging interviewees and respondents, who had their main interest in social inclusion, because their main work is with vulnerable and social marginalised groups.

If so, the design of the Benchmarking Tool must try to be based on a priority of feeds that can provide the planned tripartite focus.

### ***C. Secure the categorical distinctions between the three social benefits!***

Some of the surveys outlined findings of transverse societal benefits, where the different categories of inclusion, cohesion and democracy are merged, and it seems in practice difficult or impossible to make clear distinctions and classification of the three different societal benefits.

It may be true that the different types of societal benefits in the cultural associations in practice will be merged and closely interrelated with varied cause - effect relations, and the same process or function can at the same time generate more types of benefits.

But still, the design of the Benchmarking Tool must try to disclose some feasible distinctions between the three main societal benefits, if it shall be able to assess the different aspects of added values.

#### ***D. Secure the distinction between core values and added values***

It must be emphasised that the societal benefits are typically not the mission or raison d'Être of most of the citizen groups and associations that are active within amateur arts (where the members are active amateur artists) and voluntary culture (where volunteers organising professional arts offerings in their local communities).

These societal benefits are, rather, spin-offs or a sort of by-product or incidental result of the core activities. In general, the artistic topics are the primary and then there are secondary effects, or added values, such as well-being and health, a greener sustainable engagement or added community values, like social inclusion, cohesion and active citizenship.

We have no intentions of providing a benchmarking of the essential artistic activities. It would be another and more demanding, if not impossible task to assess and benchmark the artistic qualities or the aesthetical learning outcome in the associations, like it is a difficult or even impossible task in the field of professional arts, where the core values refer to artistic artefacts and activities related to their aesthetical dimensions of enhanced sensibilities and feelings, elaborated taste and enriched perceptions of the outer and inner realities.

Many possible stakeholders would see an ambition of benchmarking the core values of arts as poor reductionism, where we may catch the bird, but miss to catch the flights of the bird. Therefore, it can be important from the start to clarify that we have no intentions of benchmarking the core values, but only an area of the added values.

## 3.2 Recommendations for the benchmarking tool

By EDUCULT, Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung  
(EDUCULT, thinking and acting in culture and education)

Generating data in order to identify pre-conditions, success factors and main barriers of social benefit promotion in amateur arts and voluntary culture activities is the first step towards being able to pass on practical knowledge and recommendations to stakeholders in this field. The evidence-based data generated in the previously referenced national surveys provide the basis for creating a practice-oriented tool that is suitable for European-wide use. On the basis of similarities and differences in the key findings of the individual national reports, it is possible to define common categories and levels that need to be considered in a benchmarking system.

The development of the BOOST Benchmark Tool is a process of translating scientific data and observations into an instrument that offers suggestions for self-reflection in order to evaluate and, if necessary, adapt internal and external organisational processes and structures. This opportunity for reflection and adaptation should help to promote social benefits in amateur arts and voluntary culture activities.

Benchmarking is a process that originates from business economics and can be defined, for example, as the “comparison of products, services, and processes across divisions that carry out similar operations in the same organization, among competing firms in the same industry, and among firms with similar processes across different industries”.<sup>6</sup>

Another definition assumes that benchmarking is not primarily aimed at comparison, but rather at organisational change and improvement: “Benchmarking is an exemplar driven teleological process operating within an organization with the objective of intentionally changing an existing state of affairs into a superior state of affairs”.<sup>7</sup>

Benchmarking is therefore part of change and quality management that aims to improve an organisation’s offerings and services using a comparative tool. Thus, a process of change within the organisation is triggered by instruments external to the organisation.

However, the BOOST project is not about improving organisational processes as regards purely economically measurable objectives, such as profit maximisation, increasing efficiency, etc., but rather focuses on macro-social purposes with a view towards promoting common goods and social benefits. Similarly, the dimensions of social benefits can hardly be measured and evaluated by quantitative parameters but are subject to qualitative evaluation criteria through field experiences, best-practice examples and overarching success indicators.

---

<sup>6</sup> Tanya Sammut-Bonnici 2015: Benchmarking; in John Wiley & Sons: Wiley Encyclopedia of Management - Vol 12 Strategic Management, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> John P. Moriarty; Clive Smallman 2009: En route to a theory; in *Benchmarking An International Journal* 16/4: 484-503, p. 498.



Those transnational success stories and indicators from the key findings of the Baseline Survey are the basis for the comparison parameters that will appear as benchmarks in the BOOST Benchmarking Tool.

To stimulate organisational reflection and adaptability through benchmarking, three inter-connected development steps are required: firstly, by means of practical indicators on, for example, organisational structures, activity content, activity duration, formatting, target groups and partners, networking and cooperation behaviour, etc., the aim is to create comparative values (categories and subcategories) that can be used to align organisations with their own processes and structures. Secondly, these indicators should be translated into an accessible tool that can be used in everyday life. Benchmarking tools can take a variety of forms, such as graphs, questionnaires, quizzes, games, etc. The key here is to decide on a format for benchmarking. It is therefore important to decide on a format with an appropriate comparison methodology and visual presentation that is suitable for the existing content indicators. And thirdly, a measurement and evaluation system must be found with the help of which the status quo in relation to an indicator is to be compared with the status to be achieved.

For this purpose, transnational findings were created on the basis of the key findings of the national reports, which will be summarized in categories. These categories are in turn divided into subcategories that can be matched by individual comparable indicators. The subcategories here represent subcategories of a benchmark category.

For example, if the category "communication" is defined, possible subcategories would be:

- internal communication processes,
- communication with cooperation partners and sponsors,
- target group communication.

Or, if one defines "project implementation" as a category, one could, for example, choose the following subcategories:

- project period,
- formatting,
- project participants,
- sustainability
- project content.

These subcategories can now be subdivided into several indicators that can be queried/measured. To illustrate this, the subcategory "project period" can be subdivided into three indicators with possible respective questions:

- Duration of a project event: How long does a project activity last on average?
- Duration of a project: What is the average duration of a project and its activities?
- Project frequency: How often do project activities take place?

After the formation of categories and indicators, it is a matter of creating a form of assessment that enables organisations to classify their own functioning within a subcategory. This assessment can be done, for example, using numerical scales or open-ended questions with a

comparison of empirical qualitative data. This decision for such an assessment system can only be made after analysing the data and observations and forming categories, subcategories and indicators.

The three overarching categories of social inclusion, social cohesion, and active citizenship were defined as theoretical basis for the survey, and can be used as a starting point for the benchmarking tool. Beyond that, subcategories need to be defined on the basis of the survey results. One subcategory of social cohesion, for example, could be connection of people with different social backgrounds. This is a theme that comes up consistently throughout the national reports, both as a goal and as a challenge. A subcategory of active citizenship could be co-creation, which was also mentioned in many national reports. Then indicators would need to be developed for these subcategories.

At the same time, the format of the benchmarking tool should be developed. Depending on whether the assessment system is based more on quantitative or qualitative comparison, different formats are suitable. The structure and type of indicators will also be affected by the format of the tool. This format should be able to adequately reflect the content to be queried. Besides, it should be easily accessible and understandable for the target group that wants to use this tool. In the case of BOOST, the format of the tool should allow qualitative questions and assessments to be easily reflected. It should encourage reflection and thus provide sufficient scope for it. A simple comparison with the provision of states and performances to be achieved is not sufficient. For maximal accessibility, this tool should be available online and include a simple question-answer-system with additional suggestions for reflection.

Continuing with the example of the category “social cohesion” and the subcategory “connection of people with different social backgrounds”, one indicator could be staging of public performances/ exhibits which create recognition and trust between people of different backgrounds. If the tool were formatted through a question-answer-system, the following could be examples of questions and answers.

Q: Does your organisation stage performances or exhibits to connect performers/ artists and audiences with different social backgrounds?

A1) Yes, we consistently put on performances or stage exhibits that connect people with different social backgrounds.

A2) We are occasionally able to put on performances or stage exhibits that connect people with different social backgrounds, but don't offer this consistently.

A3) We would like to stage performances/ exhibits but lack the funds or resources to do so.

A4) We would like to stage performances/ exhibits but do not have connections to reach people with different social backgrounds.

A5) Staging performances/ exhibits is not relevant to our work or organization.

This could also be formatted as a checklist, where organisations check relevant boxes, which lead them to relevant results, suggestions, or information.

An example for a checklist, using the category of active citizenship and sub-category of co-creation could be the following:

*Co-creation.*

Our organization....

- **Always** includes participants/ target groups in the creation and design of events.
- **Often** includes participants/ target groups in the creation and design of events
- Gathers input and perspective from participants after a event to use in the creation of future events
- Listens to the perspectives of target groups to create events that suit their needs, but without involving them in specifics of the event
- Has open and equal discussions between staff and participants
- Largely gives responsibility for creation of events to staff, rather than participants

The challenge here is to create enough time and motivation to answer the questions so that the participants can compare their own experiences and reflections with the suggestions created from the baseline survey. Whether it also achieves a quantitative evaluation system, such as 78 out of 100 points in the promotion of social benefits, should remain open. On the one hand, it illustrates an actual status very well and possibly encourages organizations to increase their value, but on the other hand, it reduces the complex, non-profit mission of promoting social benefits down to a simple quantity.

If a quantitative rating system were to be considered, it would allow not only an overall rating, but also ratings of the different levels. A merging of the assessments of each indicator will then allow for an overall subcategory assessment. Then, a merging of the assessments of each subcategory will then allow for an overall category assessment. And further on again, a merging of the assessments of each category will allow for an overall assessment in terms of the topic of the benchmark tool, in this case the status of the promotion of social benefits through the organisation's work.

Whether quantitative and/or qualitative, it will be designed in a way to give organisations from different countries and with different characteristics (size, field of activity, reach, target groups, etc.) the opportunity to stimulate evaluation and change processes. This assessment system will be generated from the general key findings that have commonalities across countries in order to combine a transnational perspective and applicability in a benchmark tool. The challenge is on the one hand to work out these transnational perspectives and to find a way to combine them in one tool. In addition, there should be the possibility to make a differentiation in this tool with regard to character. Whether there is a selection option at the beginning of the tool, or different qualitative comparative values are listed in the assessment area in relation to the organisational character, or at another point during the implementation also remains open.

Due to the qualitative baseline survey conducted in the form of interviews and focus groups and the difficulty of reproducing the empirical data obtained in the form of quantitative success indicators, a qualitatively oriented assessment structure is probably preferable in the

context of the BOOST project. Social benefits in the form of social inclusion, social cohesion, and active citizenship are almost impossible to measure quantitatively in a transnational benchmarking application due to the existing differences in cultural nature, organisational size, field of activity, etc. The aim should be to formulate similar success stories from different cultural, organisational and atmospheric contexts across countries by means of qualitative benchmarks and recommendations.



## **Encouraging inclusive culture. Baseline Report**

**The Report has been provided as part of the Erasmus+ development project, Sept 2020 – Dec 2022, entitled: “Boost Social Inclusion in Amateur Arts and Voluntary Culture” (BOOST).**

**The huge civil society sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage in the European member states not only provide joy, friendship, and meaning for the participants, but it can also support and strengthen societal benefits.**

**This survey aims to identify the pre-conditions, success factors and main barriers to the wider promotion of societal benefits in the participatory culture. It helps the project to define a range of categories and levels for a new benchmarking tool for the learning providers in the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage.**

**The project has been supported by the Danish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.**



**Erasmus+**