Manual for the Benchmark Tool and the Practice Methods

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1. Introduction

By Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard, Interfolk - Institut for Civilsamfund

1.1 Context

This "Manual for the Benchmark Tool and Practice Methods" is published 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).

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 5 countries in Northern, Eastern and Western Europe working in the area of participatory culture and liberal adult education. The partners include four national umbrellas as well as two knowledge and research centres, representing a transnational European sum of varied expertise and experiences in the field, which we cannot find in just one of the participating countries. The partners are:
-   Det Kulturelle Samråd i Danmark (DK): **www.ksd.one**
-   Interfolk, Institut for Civilsamfund (DK): **www.interfolk.dk**
-   Creative Lives (IE): **www.creative-lives.org**
-   The Foundations of Alternative Educational Initiatives (PL): **www.fundacjaaie.eu**
-   EDUCULT – Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung (AT): **www.educult.at**
-   Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (SI): **www.jskd.si**

1.2 Background and aim

During the last years, an increased European interest in the potential of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage to foster social inclusion can be witnessed. This is reflected in a range of publications and projects focussing on this interconnection. [1]

Based on this data, own research, and results of the former Erasmus+ development project BRIDGING,[2] the partnership circle shares the view that the huge civil society sector of

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[1] Francois Matarasso: *A restless art. How participation won, and why it matters.* Gulbenkian, 2019.
EU Commission: *Social Inclusion: Partnering with Other Sectors*. 2018.
Culture Action Europe: *The Value and Values of Culture.* CAE, 2018.
Wilson, Gross, Bull: *Towards cultural democracy.* King's College London, 2017.
European Research Partnership: *Cultural and creative spillovers in Europe*. 2015.
CHCfE Consortium: *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe report*. Cultural Centre, Krakow, 2015.

[2] The Erasmus+ strategic partnership, entitled: "Bridging social capital by participatory and co-creative culture", Sept 2017 – Aug 2019, was supported by the Danish Agency of the Erasmus+ programme. The partnership circle included the Danish beneficiary association: Kulturelle Samraad i Danmark, and the partners: Interfolk (DK); VA - Voluntary Arts Network (UK); FAIE - Fundacja Alternatywnych Inicjatyw Edukacyjnych (PL); EDUCULT (AT); LACM – The Latvian Association of Castles and Manors (LV); JSKD - Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (SI); LKCA - St.Landelijk Kennisinstituut Cultuureducatie en Amateurkunst (NL).

amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage[3] in the European member states not only provide joy, friendship, and meaning for the participants, but it also supports and promotes added community values, such as social inclusion, social cohesion, and active citizenship.

We are aware that most leaders, learning providers and volunteers in the sector know of the potential of their work to support added community values. Yet, how this can be done and what categories and practical questions need to be considered when working on this objective is often unclear. Therefore, we think this potential for fostering added community values can be improved by a more conscious development work. Until now, the leaders and 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 on how to concretely assess their own activities and implement improved practice; and the overall aim of the BOOST project is to develop new tools and methods to support the actors in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage to work more consciously and systematically in promoting the added community values of their cultural activities.

1.3 Project methodology

The work programme of the 28-months project has four main phases:

FOUND
- Plan and complete the baseline survey and provide the Survey Report, English edition (O1 - Intellectual Output 1)

DEVELOP
- Design, test and publish the online Benchmark Tool, Multilingual edition (O2), including a pilot test during a Transnational Training course in Vienna.

TEST
- Design, test and publish exemplary Practice Methods with using the benchmarking tool (O3), including trilateral meetings for partners and representative learning providers as well as national training courses.

VALORISE
- Publish a Manual for using the Benchmark Tool and Practice Methods, Multilingual edition (O4).
- Complete a European Symposium to present, discuss and elaborate the Tool and Methods, and publish a Symposium Compendium (O5).
- Disseminate the project results in national multiplier events and other concluding dissemination activities.

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[3] Here is used a tripartite division of the sector, where "heritage" is included together with "amateur arts" and "voluntary culture".

1.4 Disposition of the Manual

The "Manual for the Benchmark Tool and Practice Methods" is provided in the last phase of the project as the second last intellectual Output, number 4 out of 5. The aim of this output is to make the Benchmark Tool as well as the Practice Methods available to the wider public by providing a manual on how to use those instruments.

The Manual has the following disposition:

- In this chapter 1, the context and perspectives of the Manual is presented by the project coordinator from the Danish association, Interfolk (DK).

- In chapter 2, the methodological guide for using the Benchmark Tool is presented by the director of the Austrian research and counsellor organisation, EDUCULT.

- In chapter 3, the four practice organisations from the project consortium present good practice examples on using the benchmarking method to assess and develop the added community values of their cultural activities. The four articles are provided by the project leaders from Creative Lives in Ireland; National Association of Cultural Councils in Denmark; the Polish Foundation of Alternative Educational Initiatives; and the Slovenian Public Fund for Cultural Activities.

- In the chapter 4, the practice examples of using the benchmark tool are assessed and the effectiveness of using the Benchmark methodology is evaluated, and the chapter is concluded with recommendations for future applications, which are provided by the project manager from EDUCULT in a dialog with the involved project partners.

1.5 Perspectives

The project BOOST aims at empowering learning providers in the sector of amateur arts and voluntary culture to promote added varied aspects of community values, such as social inclusion, social cohesion, active citizenship, and democratic values.

This manual intends to support the self-reflection of the leaders and learning providers on their potential for fostering added community values by assessing different dimensions and categories of their organisation's structure and activities; and it can strengthen the focus on varied practice-oriented options for improvements.

We hope it can help to initiate thorough quality development processes among associations in the sector. In the short-term perspective the tools and methods can support a more systematic self-assessment that can help the learning providers to define their strategy and clarify possible changes in detail. On the long-term, we expect the project's information provision, awareness raising as well as new possibilities for further education will inspire the learning providers in the sector to be more societally engaged and to raise their efforts to promote the added community values of their activities.

2. Methodological guide for the Benchmark Tool

By Oliver Löscher and Aron Weigl, EDUCULT - Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung

2.1 Why a Benchmark Tool for participatory culture?

The main output of the BOOST project is the development and provision of an online Benchmark Tool for actors in the field of amateur arts and voluntary culture. The question that arises in this context is why are we introducing an instrument that originates in the economy into the cultural and social sector? The goal of an (economically) oriented benchmark can be described as such:

"The goal of benchmarking is to identify the weaknesses within an organization and improve upon them, with the idea of becoming the "best of the best." The benchmarking process helps managers to find gaps in performance and turn them into opportunities for improvement. Benchmarking enables companies to identify the most successful strategies used by other companies of comparable size, type, or regional location, and then adopt relevant measures to make their own programs more efficient." [4]

But are those involved in amateur arts and volunteer culture also concerned with being the "best of the best"? It is probably not the case for many, but it is very much about achieving one's own defined goals and reaching the relevant target groups with offers of amateur arts and voluntary culture and thus also securing one's own organisational existence and acting socially, culturally and economically sustainable. Therefore, this instrument is not much about increasing one's own financial surplus through benchmarking, but about increasing the social benefits that the organisation wants to achieve through a tool that is mainly used for self-reflection:

"The project supports the sector by the development of a not yet existing, innovative and applicable Benchmark Tool for self-reflection, in order to make social inclusion through amateur arts and voluntary culture more successful." (BOOST Project Bible)

2.2 What are the so-called social benefits?

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

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[4] Cf. https://www.referenceforbusiness.com/management/A-Bud/Benchmarking.html

Typically, the meaning of "**social inclusion**" [5] in the field of arts and culture implies:
- to ensure *equal opportunities* for all to have access to and take part in 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. [6]

Typically, the meaning of "**social cohesion**" [7] 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 other key concept for social change or societal benefits that are important in the field, namely "**active citizenship**" [8] also in the field of arts and culture that 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.

2.3 Where does the BOOST Benchmark Tool come from?

The Baseline Survey "Encouraging inclusive culture. Baseline Report of the EU project BOOST" conducted in all five partner countries Slovenia, Denmark, Poland, Austria and Ireland served as the starting point for the Benchmark Tool. The Baseline Survey aims at researching concrete success factors and challenges of promoting societal benefits with stakeholders from the sector.

The Baseline Survey identifies 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 interview questions and the standardised questionnaire were designed to ask about the social benefits defined in the project.

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[5] 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

[6] See https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/social-inclusion/27360

[7] 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.

[8] See http://lllplatform.eu/policy-areas/xxi-century-skills/active-citizenship/

Methodologically, data collection in the survey included 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.

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.

2.4 How was the BOOST Benchmark Tool developed?

Based on the evidence-based success factors and challenges in this particular cultural field questions were formulated, which should cover these different topics. So, with this, the responses and gained data from the interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires were inverted into, again, questions designed to encourage users to self-reflect on each topic area. An attempt was made to work as holistically as possible in order to include all statements made in the different countries.

Without providing specific benchmarks directly, the tool now manages to indirectly communicate good practices from the European area in questions that allow users to compare their own organisational structure, program and activities, and networking with other actors from the field in Europe. It is important to emphasise that this access does not fuel the idea of competition, which is actually the basic idea of an economic benchmark tool, but rather aims at the exchange of experiences and the comparison of different success factors and challenges.

2.5 How does the BOOST Benchmark Tool look like?

Along the results of the survey a Benchmark Tool was developed which appears as a visually presented and user-friendly online questionnaire, starts with initial explanations, a glossary and introductory questions, is divided into the three main topics „Structure of the Organisation", "Programme and Activities" and „Networking", and is subordinated in various sub-topics below the main topics, aims to evaluate and reflect on the social benefits "social inclusion, "social cohesion" and "active citizenship".

Ad. 1. To make the benchmark tool as freely accessible and user-friendly as possible, it will be available as an online tool. This can be accessed at the following link: https://www.boost.jskd.si

It appears not only as a "simple" questionnaire but has been prepared in a graphically appealing way to motivate users to complete the tool.

Ad. 2. Before the actual benchmarking test begins, users are first directed to subpages with an initial introduction/explanation/instruction. Secondly, a glossary is presented, which also explains the following terms: *„People with fewer opportunities/resources", "Different/*

various social groups", "Participation", "Margina-lised groups", "Social inclusion", "Social cohesion", "Active citizenship", "Critical social issues" and "Social Sustainability".

Ad. 3. The tool contains a total of 55 questions with 5 optional questions, which are assigned to three main topics. The three main topics were built after formulating questions based on the data of the Baseline Survey. According to the content of the questions, question clusters were formed, which were then given these topic titles:

a. **Structure of the Organisation (16 questions)**: Under this topic, questions were assigned that asked about a specific management technique employed to arrange tasks within a group. It generally refers to the set of job titles, hierarchies and main responsibilities of different employees of an organisation.

b. **Programme and Activities (29 questions + 1 possible questions):** This topic has been assigned questions that capture the overall programme orientation of an organisation, its content as well as its activities and dissemination measures.

c. **Networking (10 questions + 4 questions):** This topic covers all issues related to networking activities with public, civil society and media actors.

Ad. 4. Since the main topics are very extensive and a substructure was necessary for a better overview, clustering was again carried out at the secondary level and sub-topics were defined for the main topics, to which questions were assigned. The following sub-topics were defined for the main topics:

a. **Structure of the Organisation:** "Goals/Mission", "Decision-making processes", "Diversity of team/members" and "Sustainability "

b. **Programme and Activities:** "Reaching out", "Media channels", "Planning", "Activities", "Location", "Consistency" and "Critical awareness"

c. **Networking:** "Exchange with other organisations", "Exchange with community", "Exchange with government" and "Exchange with media"

Ad.5. In order to be able to make statements on the social benefits "social inclusion" (i), "social cohesion" (c) and "active citizenship" (a) in the evaluation of the Benchmark Tool Test, an assignment had to be made here as well. The individual questions or, if necessary, the individual answer options within a question were assigned to the appropriate social benefit that the respective question or answer option is aimed at. Through this allocation, an assessment of the Benchmark Tool test can take place that is also oriented towards these social benefits.

On the following pages, the entire glossary and a tabular summary of the benchmark tool can be studied in detail.

Glossary

People with fewer opportunities/resources: People with fewer opportunities means people who, for economic, social, cultural, geographical or health reasons, a migrant background, or for reasons such as disability and educational difficulties or for any other reasons, including those that can give rise to discrimination under article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union, face obstacles that prevent them from having effective access to opportunities under the programme.[9]

Different/various social groups: groups which have different social backgrounds/ resources/experiences can mean different economic, religious, ethnic, gender, cultural, educational, and other backgrounds/resources/ experiences – and often limited interaction to other social groups.

Participation: the act of attending an event or activity; participation through active citizenship means taking part in democratic practices such as voting, attending protests, union democracy, engaging with politics at the local/regional/national level, and becoming involved in community decision making.

Marginalised groups: groups that are on the edge/margin of society; often excluded from mainstream/public cultural activities due to an "acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities"[10] along socioeconomic characteristics such as income, educational background, gender, physical and cognitive abilities, ethnicity, culture, religion etc.

Social inclusion: the process of including more people in participation, particularly people who are disadvantaged/have fewer opportunities, through enhancing opportunities, giving access to resources, a voice to be heard and respect their rights.

Social cohesion: "the degree to which members of a society are willing to co-operate with each other to improve the quality of life and wellbeing for all"[11]. It also means mutual recognition between different social groups and mutual trust between the citizens.

Active citizenship: commitment to activities that uphold and promote democratic values, attitudes and cohesion between people. It also means involvement in communities and democracy at all levels, both locally, nationally and globally, just as it means commitment to the common good and the well-being of society.

Critical social issues: important societal issues that affect people and which society often seeks to solve or change. These are areas such as poverty, relations between ethnic/cultural groups, climate change, gender issues, mental health, etc.

Social Sustainability: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[12] "Social sustainability is a process that aims to create sustainable successful places that promote wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places they live and work."[13]

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[9] European Commission - Erasmus+. Glossary of terms - Common terms. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-d/glossary-common-terms)

[10] Cf. UNESCO.2010. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186606

[11] Cf. The Arts Council. Glossary: Making Great Art Work. https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/Arts_in_Ireland/Strategic_Development/Making-Great-Art-Work-glossary.pdf

[12] Cf. UNESCO. 1987. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000139369

[13] Saffron Woodcraft. 2015. Understanding and measuring social sustainability.

Benchmark tool summary					
Introductory Questions		**No.**	**Question**	**Multiple Answers**	**Benefits**
		I	In which country is your organisation headquartered?	no	
		II	In which civil society area of cultural activities does your organisation has its main activity?	no	
		III	Which type of civil society organisation do you represent?	no	
		IV	Which form of activity does your organisation mainly provide?	yes	
		V	Which content of activity does your organisation mainly provide?	yes	
		VI	Which financial resources does your organisation have?	yes	
		VII	Who is doing the main work in your organisation?	yes	
		VIII	What kind of spaces are available to your organisation?	yes	
Topics	Subtopics	No.	Question	Multiple Answers	Benefits
1. Structure of organisation	Goals/Mission	1	Which of these goals/missions does your organisation have?	yes	a,c,i
		2	Does your organisation have an official mission statement?	no	a,c,i
		3	Do you have a monitoring procedure to assess the achievement of formal/informal goals?	no	a,c,i
	Decision-making processes	4	Do all the people working/volunteering in your organisation participate in making planning decisions?	no	a,c,i
		5	Does your organisation encourage the people working/volunteering in your organisation to take part in decision-making processes?	no	a
		6	Does your organisation have meetings to reflect on whether your work is achieving its goals/mission?	no	a,c,i
		7	Does your organisation have procedures to consider and include feedback from participants/activities?	no	a
	Diversity of team/members	8	Do people with fewer opportunities take part in decision-making regarding function and structure of the organisation?	no	a, i
		9	Do people with fewer opportunities take part in leadership of the organisation?	no	i

		10	Is the team/are the members of the organisation balanced in terms of gender?	no	c,i
		11	Is the team/are the members of the organisation ethnically diverse	no	c,i
		12	Is the team/are the members of the organisation intergenerationally diverse?	no	c,i
	Sustainability	13	To what extent is social sustainability/long-term continuation considered in your planning?	no	c
		14	Does your organization take measures to ensure long-term continuation and social sustainability?	yes	c,i
		15	How often do participants become volunteers or employees?	no	a,i
		16	Does your organisation provide opportunities for further growth and education of team members?	no	a
2. Programme and activities	Reaching out	17	Does your organisation reach out to different social groups to ensure exchange between the groups?	no	c
		18	Does your organisation reach out to specific groups with fewer opportunities/ resources?	no	i
		19	Are your information/communication/ outreach activities...?	yes	c,i
	Media channels	20	How many media channels (web, email, newsletter, IG, FB, etc.) does your organisation use to reach out to different social groups?	no	c,i
		21	Is your organisation using social media for reaching different social groups?	no	c
		22	Is your organisation using social media for reaching groups with fewer opportunities and resources?	no	i
	Planning	23	Are needs/perspectives of local community members included in decision-making and planning processes in the organisation?	no	a,i
		24	Does your organisation plan and implement its activities in a participatory manner, i.e. are participants and audiences able to take part in planning?	no	a,i
		25	Does your organisation provide ways for participants to give feedback on their experience with your organisation?	no	a
	Activities	26a	Do you have a pricing for your activities?	no	i
		26b	Is the pricing for your activities ... ?	yes	c,i
		27	Would you consider your audience/ participants of your activities diverse in terms	no	c,i

			of different social groups, vulnerable and marginalized groups and linguistic/ cultural backgrounds represented?		
		28	Do your activities create a positive effect for individual participants?	no	a,c,i
		29	Do your activities create a positive effect in the community?	no	c
		30	Do you measure or evaluate the impact/effect of your activities?	no	a,c,i
		31	What kind of education opportunities do you offer?	yes	a,c,i
		32	How participatory are your activities?	no	a
	Location	33	Are the locations of your activities attractive/inviting to different social groups	no	c
		34	Are the locations of your activities inviting to people with fewer opportunities/ resources?	no	i
		35	Are the locations of your activities accessible for people with visible and non-visible disabilities?	no	i
		36	Are the locations of your activities easily reachable (e.g. by public transport)?	no	i
		37	Does your organisation change locations for different events to make them attractive/ inviting to different social groups?	yes	c,i
		38	Does your organisation cooperate with local organisations (e.g. from the municipality or other organisations) in terms of event locations?	no	c
		39	Does your organisation implement outdoor events?	no	i
	Consistency	40	Are the activities of your organisation regularly and repeatedly offered?	no	a,c,i
		41	Are you able to suit the length of your offer to the participants' needs (i.e. as long-term or short-term as possible)?	no	a,c,i
		42	Are you able to suit the meeting time and/or duration of events to the participants' needs?	no	a,c,i
	Critical awareness	43	Do your activities raise new (innovative) questions and perspectives for the participants/members?	no	a,c,i
		44	Do your activities raise questions and open discussions on important and critical social issues?	no	a
		45	Does your organisation use tactful and sensible language when approaching/ addressing vulnerable and marginalized groups?	no	i

3. Networking and cooperation	Exchange with other organisations	46	Does your organisation network with groups or organisations that work more closely with people with fewer opportunities/resources?	no	i
		47	How much do you work or connect with organisations that have similar target groups as your organisation has?	no	c,i
		48	How much do you work or connect with organisations that have different target groups than your organisation has?	no	c
		49	How often do you link other organisations with one another?	no	c
		50a	How often does your organisation cooperate on an international/European level?	no	a,c,i
		50b	What goals does your organisation pursue with such cooperation?	yes	a,c,i
	Exchange with community	51	How often does your organisation cooperate with other organisations/ public institutions in the local community?	no	c
		52a	How often does your organisation attend/organise local community events?	no	a,c
		52b	What goals does your organisation pursue with such cooperation?	yes	a,c,i
	Exchange with government	53	How often does your organisation cooperate with the local/regional government?	no	a,c,i
		54a	How often does your organisation cooperate with the national government?	no	a,c,i
		54b	What goals does your organisation pursue with such cooperation	yes	a,c,i
	Exchange with media	55a	How often does your organisation reach out to (local) media for coverage?	no	a,c,i
		55b	What goals does your organisation pursue with such cooperations?	yes	a,c,i

2.6 How to use the Benchmark Tool?

The Benchmark Tool is easy to use as you are guided through the tool by a user-friendly interface and clear instructions. At the beginning, you can choose the language (English, Polish, Slovenian, German or Danish), and then proceed with or without registration. Your registration offers the advantage that you can:

1. save completed tests in your profile so that you can compare them with a repeated test at a later date,

2. and share and compare test results with other colleagues from the same organisation to reach a larger sample from your own organisation.

The two options - registration or no registration – have varied benefits:

1. The unregistered version can be used anonymously by all, and still the result can be printed and saved by the user, but the data will not be saved for comparative surveys. Here we have no introductory section with questions about the user.

2. The registered version imply that the user must register with a username and a password, so the data can be saved not only for comparative surveys, but also so the user when making a new answer can compare any improvement compared with own former answers. Here we have the introductory section with user questions.

3. After this choice and the optional introductory questions, the actual tool begins. Depending on interest and time, it is possible for the user to either complete the test only on one of the main topics "Structure of the Organisation", "Programme and Activities", and „Networking" or to complete the whole test consisting all the main topics with overall 55 +5 possible questions.

2.7 How are the results presented?

Based on the category chosen and the answers provided, a pie chart is created which highlights the status of the organization within one of the following three observed categories: social inclusion/social cohesion/active citizenship.

The results from each category and the associated pie chart are broken down into organizational topics which are examined within the Benchmark tool (Structure of organization/ Programme and activities/ Networking and cooperation).

The visual representation of the answers is further summarized by more detailed subtopics and indicates the status of the organization with respect to the category and topics which have been chosen and answered.

GREEN COLOR: indicates a high level of awareness regarding the observed category (commitment to the issue on the systematic level)

YELLOW COLOR: indicates intermediate level of awareness regarding the observed category (the acknowledgment of the problem, and recognition of importance on making changes)

RED COLOR: indicates low level of awareness regarding the observed category (your organization does not regard this as a problem)

Besides, some links to further information, videos and documents how to develop the organization's contribution to social benefits is provided.

3. Four practice examples of using the benchmarking method

3.1 Irish example - Take A Part Carlow

By Damien McGlynn, Creative Lives Ireland; and Lisa Brooks, Take a Part Carlow

A socially engaged arts collective

Take A Part Carlow is a socially engaged arts collective based in the Tullow Road area of Carlow town in Ireland. The project was initiated by Carlow County Council Arts Office in partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland (under the Invitation to Collaboration Scheme), Take A Part CIC (UK), Carlow County Development Partnership and Carlow Regional Youth Services. Representatives of these organisations and members of the local community are part of the Arts Action Group that oversees the project.[14]

There are 13 different housing estates in the Tullow Road area, with about 3,150 residents. Since its inception in 2016, Take A Part Carlow has delivered more than 25 arts projects. Take A Part Carlow co-creates site-specific and people-specific art works that explore the stories of the local communities with whom they work. Their program of work aims to uncover shared stories, heritage and cultural interests while creating exciting and challenging arts projects, happenings and events. The Take A Part Carlow ethos is based on trust; trusting the artists/creators they work with and trusting their artistic process. They are always open to new ideas and aim to be visionary in what they set out to do.

Take A Part Carlow's work takes many forms - it could be the creation of a new dance form, an art installation, a performance event or a cultural celebration. Drawing inspiration from local people, shared history and places, their work is made with and for the local communities and takes place in sites that are pertinent to the work they create. Take A Part Carlow invites its participants to share their experiences, their creativity and to allow themselves to be challenged through making art, to go on a creative journey with them which just might end in an unexpected destination. Ultimately, the group strives to work long-term and to invest in its people, its artists, creators, places and communities.

"Working with Take A Part Carlow can sometimes be challenging, but it is also relaxing and enjoyable – we never feel under pressure to produce a finished perfect artwork, that's not

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[14] See the video about the practice method with Creative Life and Take A Part Carlow: https://boostparticipation.eu/practice-methods-ireland/

what this is about – instead it is all about the process, the sharing and the learning. Yet we have produced a huge number of artworks, events and projects." – Lisa Brooks, Chairperson of the Arts Action Group

Testing the draft Benchmark Tool

Take A Part Carlow tested the draft Benchmark Tool developed as part of the BOOST project and found that it raised quite a number of questions and issues for the Arts Action Group. Despite being established as a project with clear social objectives, many of the issues raised by the Benchmark Tool had not been fully considered before or were not high priorities during planning and decision-making stages.

The points that the group primarily focused on were in the category of social inclusion. The five questions that they wanted to address were:

- Is the Take A Part Carlow team balanced in terms of gender and ethnicity?
- Are information/communications/outreach activities reaching people with fewer resources/opportunities and available in locally used languages?
- Is the Take A Part Carlow programme diverse in terms of inclusivity and acceptance?
- Are activities accessible for people with visible/non-visible disabilities?
- Does Take A Part Carlow take care to act in an environmentally and socially responsible way?

The pilot course

Creative Lives and Take A Part Carlow worked together to hold a course in February 2022 to examine these issues and learn from others working in the field of community work and social inclusion. This workshop involved members of the Arts Action Group working through ideas of how to implement changes in their organisation internally and also their external programme of activities to improve their inclusivity and contributions to active citizenship.

In organising this course, it was important to ensure that it was an open dialogue between everyone involved and not to present one 'perfect' solution to how these things should be done. We talked a lot about the relevance of the work to the local community and the need to reflect the unique demographics of the community in which the project is active. This will be different in the context of any project so everyone was quite clear that we were not being too critical of existing work by Take A Part Carlow or saying that any other project was better than theirs, but instead we were focusing on what matters most in the context of the Tullow Road area and how we could aim to improve the outcomes.

Another point that was considered strongly was to aim to make the course and the discussion as inclusive as possible, considering the timing, format and accessibility of the chosen venue to try to accommodate as many people as possible. We felt it was important

that we didn't simply talk about these things as aspirational goals but actually put them into practice as much as possible from the outset.

Ideas for changes

Working with all of those present through conversations that took place across the whole group and also in smaller groups of 4-6 people, we considered the practical changes that could be applied to the structure of Take A Part Carlow and development of its programme of activities. It was important to listen to the different perspectives from individuals in the room as each had a different perception of how well Take A Part Carlow was doing in different areas and where it needed to improve.

Consensus emerged about which groups or demographics were less involved in the organisation or less likely to participate in the programme. These included non-English speakers, members of the Traveller community, men and those with certain learning disabilities. Some clear ideas were proposed on ways to overcome potential barriers as to why these groups may not be engaging with the organisation or its programme.

These ideas included taking steps like including a QR code on promotional posters which would be clearly marked with flags to denote the languages included and when a person scanned this with their smartphone, it would take them to multiple translated versions of the poster online – thereby making the information more accessible to a wider range of individuals who are not necessarily English speakers without the need for printing an excessive number of posters or cluttering the page with multiple languages.

Taking steps to involve others in developing parts of the programme was a popular idea among the group. For example, working with local men to identify the kinds of activities that they would want to participate in was seen as an important step that would first diversify the decision-making or programming group and would then in turn, hopefully, lead to greater participation among this demographic in activities.

Similarly, plans were discussed to involve some local children living with autism and other conditions to help design activities that they would feel comfortable participating in themselves. This was seen as important for designing inclusive activities and developing the learning of others involved in programming, while also acknowledging that it is nearly impossible to design activities that are inclusive of absolutely everyone as something that suits one particular group really well can be a barrier to another group.

New partnerships

More broadly the Arts Action Group identified possible partnerships with other community organisations that might help to build further connections with under-represented groups in the local area. This was seen as a really important priority to diversify representation in the Arts Action Group, especially at a time when the organisation was ramping up face-to-face activities again after two years of largely remote projects during the pandemic.

Following the work on the Practice Methods, the Arts Action Group committed to:

- Deliver free, fun, unique and inclusive high quality and best practice socially engaged art on the Tullow Road, Carlow Town.

- Continue building Take A Part Carlow's collaborative engagement capabilities at a local, national and European level.

- Recognising the existing capacity within the community that Take A Part Carlow serves, examine pathways for building capacity of community representatives and widen the participation and engagement of other community members.

- Develop meaningful, consolidated, durational and embedded arts initiatives which build from the ground up a deep belief in community capabilities to make change for the better for the long term.

Outcome and recommendations

One of the major points that emerged from the process was just how valuable it was to take a step back and examine the work of Take A Part Carlow through the Benchmark Tool and Practice Methods. As explained earlier, the project has always had explicit social goals, but sometimes it takes a particular task or project to encourage those involved to really take stock and consider where they might be overlooking important points around social inclusion.

We felt that this was a common issue among arts and culture organisations of different scales – whether they were large professional organisations or small voluntary associations – where the pressure or desire to deliver activities can distract or blind the programmers from taking a more inclusive or democratic approach in the early stages of programme development. The idea of embedding co-creation in all levels of the organisation is ambitious and challenging but can ultimately be quite rewarding if it is properly implemented in, for example, strategy and governance, as well as programme development and practical cultural activities.

The main recommendations from the experience of working on these aspects of the BOOST project in the last year are to allow enough time to properly consider all aspects of your organisation's work, try to involve as many people as possible (internal and external) in reviewing your organisation and developing ideas for change, and finally to remain open, inclusive and collaborative in carrying out this work because it is only through living and practicing these principles in your internal processes that you will see the benefits of the principles coming through in the programme and outcomes of your organisation and its work.

3.2 Danish example – Inclusive cultural activities in Køge and Furresø

By Bente von Schindel, Kulturelle Samråd i Danmark

The Cultural councils involved in the project

In Denmark we have 98 municipalities, and you'll find cultural councils in most of them. The councils consist of persons representing local organisations in the field of art and culture and they are as such involved in local cultural policy. They also help to ensure that citizens are involved in cultural life and that civil society is heard when it comes to local cultural policy. In addition, the local volunteer cultural councils themselves are organisers of art and cultural events.

The cultural councils are supported by municipal funds - however, there is a large difference in the size of the amounts from municipality to municipality - ranging from 20,000 EUR to 200,000 EUR, some of which are reserved for projects that the local cultural associations can apply for.

The Cultural Council of Køge

In Køge – a municipality approx. 45 km south of Copenhagen - they have a very active cultural council that is involved in many activities. This includes, among other things, running a community centre in a former library, where the cultural volunteers and associations can gather and hold meetings, where you have access to various aids and materials and where you can borrow books without registration.

The Cultural Council of Furesø

The Board of representatives in the cultural council of Furesø consists of 7 members + 2 deputies. The board represents a wide range of associations ranging from music association, jazz clubs to family stage, school museum and "Save the Children" organisation. The council holds every year a mini-culture festival in cooperation with the local culture house "Stien" and - together with The Center for Volunteers the cultural council it is also now trying to collaborate with ethnic Danes to have a better understanding of cultures across. The cultural council of Furesø receives a deficit guarantee from the municipality of 1,344 EUR annually.

As for the learning providers

Both mentioned cultural councils have participated in the BOOST project as learning providers. Both councils are special as they are good at thinking beyond their own interests, but in the given case they also got a pat on the shoulder from the national organisation, Kulturelle Samråd I Danmark.

The fact that they do not initiate initiatives of projects that benefit social inclusion is probably due to the fact that Danish local associations typically are formed in a way, where all members have a common interests, which are described in the statues and in a so-called action plan, and if you share that interest, you can simply join the association or - if you want something else - you can form another one. Every organisation that adheres to a few rules: has a minimum of 5 members, has an independent economy, is open to all and has statues proving that it is a non-profit organisation, so it can be entitled to receive support from the local government. And if you want to change something in an association, you can stand for election to the board or as a member express your opinion at the meetings of the Board of Representatives, and you will often be heard. This is what we call "having the small democracy in the big", and it can be a gain for many that the country is so thoroughly democratised.

None-users

But there are of course citizens who - for various reasons - do not find it natural to participate in cultural activities or become a member of a local association, not to mention join the board of it. It can be children and grown-ups, who don't come from homes where they are familiar with art and culture, immigrants who come from areas where the agenda is completely different, or elderly people who do not have the strength to arrange activities themselves and for whom no cultural activities are arranged.

As a result of the system "I can create my own association", the existing cultural associations do not think about these areas in their activities, and there will be a group of "non-users" around in the municipalities. "Non-users" is a term used in a study "Danes' cultural habits", which is made every two years by the Danish Ministry of Culture.

Therefore, the benchmark tool should inspire the local associations to change their action plan or their statues and start doing something for the "non-users".

The open School project in KØGE

In connection with KSD and the cultural administration in Køge Municipality and the Cultural Council Køge were encouraged to make a joint project - an "Open School" project (an idea from the Ministry of Education).

Purpose and idea

The idea of the project is to give children, who are not normally users of the cultural association or culture in general a better access to culture and art in order to create the good life for them in an actively inclusive environment. Another of the project's ideas is that the associations expand their activities and create interest in a wider target group. This would help to ensure cultural sustainability: citizens help citizens, and it'll create equal conditions for all, which in turn can help the associations to work with social inclusion. A topic there - i.a. due to the refugee situation in Denmark - is much highlighted.

Methods

The activities took place in the schools or in places selected by the associations and teachers. And as it is difficult and can be seen as discriminating to separate the children from a grade level into two groups, one for those who are not usually users of cultural offerings and one for those who are, Kulturelt Samråd Køge has chosen to target the activities to whole classes.

The activities were based on the competence areas of the associations in question, or topics where they have special prerequisites. Activities made by the member associations of the cultural council Køge have included:

- Skovbo Art Society provided art exhibitions with a guided tour adapted to children, where artists became guest teachers and exhibition tour guides and ran projects with children.

- Apollonaris Teater association provided a theatre performance on bullying with a debate, as part of school integration/inclusion work.

- Køge School Orchestra provided a lecture on 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.

- An art trail in the Køge area.

- The Denmark-Society provided a lecture on Dannebrog (the Danish flag, the world's oldest).

- The Ejby Choir provided examples of classic song and opera, including information on being a soloist and working with choirs.

- Ejby Cultural Center provided a session on genealogy, where the children interviewed parents, grandparents and great-grandparents and found information on archives and the Internet.

- Culture Society of Skovbo provided a session on 'Peter and the Wolf', where trained flutist told the story and used recordings of the different instruments to describe the characters in the story. In the absence of an end to the story, the children themselves made poems and drew a conclusion, while the music played.

These activities were intended to have a range of benefits for the children, including developing their mental abilities and cultural intelligence, creating shared experiences and common wonder, touching the emotions, challenging, provoking, creating reflection, awareness and self-understanding, developing opportunities to verbalise feelings, experiences and actions, creating understanding between children of each other's cultural backgrounds and developing tolerance in a social environment.

Music that creates cohesion in FURESØ

In Furesø Municipality, where the organisation Save the Children is a member of the cultural council, and where they also have the country's only Immigrant Museum, it was natural for the two organisations to cooperate with the large group of immigrants and refugees, they have here.

Method

In the cultural council Furesø they established a networks in order to hold cultural events with the participation of volunteer cultural guides, (adults) and cultural crews, (young people in the age group 15-25 years) in Furesø Municipality and volunteers in the Danish Red Cross with a view to providing children and young people, with and without asylum or residence permit, with a stay in the reception centre for new asylum seekers in the Danish Red Cross Asylum Center, Center Sandholm, access to artistic and cultural activities in voluntary cultural associations in the local area.

The challenge in Furesø Municipality was to find a cultural activity that did not require much Danish skills as not many of the families could speak Danish very well or at all. The organisations therefore chose to use music as an introduction in cooperation with the local Music School that was also a member of the Cultural Council Furesø, and they chose to involve both parents and children in the group, as they were not entirely sure that the children would show up alone. The session should last over half a day and the involved should be children and parents - both ethnic Danes and refugees/immigrant groups, who participated in playing drums of various sizes and where teachers from the local music school instructed and where you then played with your own family and mingled with others.

The session itself took place on a Friday afternoon (remember not to put the activities on Saturdays and Sundays, as these days are public holidays for different faiths). There was at the meeting a total of 10 immigrant children. Most had their fathers with them and if the mothers were there, they did not participate in the session but just waited in the audience seats. There were 11 Danish children, most of whom had brought both their fathers and mothers.

In addition to musical instruments, plenty of food was provided, which also contributed to the good mood. There were also representatives from a number of local associations, who told about their work and how to participate. Leaflets in several languages had been presented, too.

Recommendations from the two practice examples

There is no doubt that the mentioned initiatives have made the local associations think in inclusion, and by gaining knowledge of the benchmark tool, the local associations can be inspired to think in new initiatives - initiatives that they have not immediately implemented in their articles of association or in their action plans, but which they will probably take with them in the future planning.

The inspiration can be further strengthened by mentioning the Boost project and the initiatives it has launched. [15]

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[15] See the video about the practice method with KSD and the cultural councils of Køge:
https://boostparticipation.eu/practice-methods-denmark/

Recommendations to learning provides in inclusion projects

1. Make your choices (locations, topics, end user groups) early in the project, but make sure you have the buy-in of your local partnership team.

2. Provide information to the member associations, about what the role entails, what is expected of them in terms of time commitment and standards, and also practical considerations like health and safety, personal boundaries and incident reporting.

3. Ensure that communication between all stakeholders and local partnership teams remains frequent and of high quality, to prevent them from losing interest and sense of ownership in the project.

4. Remember that this will be the first time many non-users have participated in culture, so make sure their introduction is as gentle as possible and use words they can relate to.

3.3 Polish Example - The Spichlerz Local Activity Association

By Agnieszka Dadak, Fundacja Alternatywnych Inicjatyw Edukacyjnych

Profile of the Spichlerz Local Activity Association

The Spichlerz Local Activity Association[16] is a non-governmental organization located in Czernica, a small village with around 2 200 inhabitants in the Silesian voivodeship.

The history of the Association began in 2011 by founding an informal group researching the genealogy of the local noble family von Roth – Hugo von Roth baron mainly, who used to own the Czernica village. Since these activities were met with interest by the local community, the group decided to establish an association in 2012.

The organisation is active in the field of local heritage, local culture, traditions and identity. Its research includes cooperation with the local senior citizens – as the bearers of the traditions and memories. The Association members are both the locals and people who moved to Czernica from bigger cities. The team of the Association pays a lot of attention to taking care of good cooperation and understanding between the local people and the newcomers and offers a space for the realization of various ideas of the local inhabitants. There are inhabitants of all generations who are members, co-operands, and/or participants of the activities of the Association. Currently, the Association has 40 members and 50 volunteers and cooperates with 40 seniors. Beginning from 2016, the Association manages the Culture House "Zameczek" in Czernica, having its headquarters in the renovated, XIX-century former castle of the von Roth baron. [17]

The Association decided to implement the inspirations from the Benchmark Tool (BT) by testing it in the planning and delivering of the cyclical winter event - the "Czernicka Christmas Tree"meeting. In 2021, the event was planned as much bigger and involving many more stakeholders than in previous years – evolving into a Community Christmas Market. [18]

The Benchmark Tool experience and the expectations

Asked about which work areas have been sensitised by the Benchmark Tool in the organisation, it was underlined that the most important for the Spichlerz team is working for the local community and building partnerships with other organisations and non-formal groups. They felt they should be more attentive with planning - careful not to get into the

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[16] The webpage of the Spichlerz Association: http://www.sdlspichlerz.pl/
Facebook: https://pl-pl.facebook.com/SDLSpichlerz/

[17] The webpage of the Culture House "Zameczek": http://kulturaczernica.weebly.com/

[18] See the two videos about the practice method with the Spichlerz Local Activity Association:
https://boostparticipation.eu/practice-methods-poland/

routine. The team decided to design and create a new event with some new partners to test this new approach.

Among the expectations/desires named through participation in the benchmarking process, there was the one to be more aware of how the Association's actions impact the local community and to design/implement their activities as responding to specific local needs, respecting the specificity of all audience groups (including groups with fewer resources)".

The main changes expected during the testing phase (i.e., implementing the practice method in practice) regarding the organisational structure, the programme and the networking and cooperation area were named as follows: *"We expect to develop ourselves during the event's organization. The new offer we provide should allow us to test our partnerships and our internal structure. We would like to see how we could cooperate and communicate better"*.

As the Spichlerz team underlines, "Testing the Benchmark Tool (BT) allowed us to become more aware of several areas of functioning of the Association. It also helped us to plan and name our activities more consciously. The BT inspired us to introduce interventions, especially in the two BT areas: Programme and Networking and Cooperation".

The Community Christmas Market 2021

The planning started around October 2021 and concluded with the event itself, on December 12th in Czernica. The event was organised by joining efforts of several other organisations, institutions, enterprises, and informal groups cooperating with the Association, including the local authorities and the regional media. The audience was being reached through the personal invitations, the local radio, local TV, newspapers, and internet portals. All the partners were involved in the direct promotion of the event, using their channels of communication and advertising.

The programme

Concerning the programme, while planning the event, special attention was paid to adjusting the scheduled programme of the event for the needs/expectations/interests of very various groups of participants – taking into account people of all ages and interests.

As one of the Spichlerz leaders recalls, "For us, very important was the space for participation. We have analysed this element thoroughly while planning the event. We have started assuming that the event could be fully participatory for the local community only if we would include the partners – representatives of the local community – already at the concept - planning stage. Such an approach always is a challenge. This was the first stage of building the common mission of the event, instead of just presenting the people with the division of tasks – who does what and who is responsible for what. That seems to be easier, faster, and simpler. Here, we have started to work together at an early stage, designing the concept of the event altogether – asking about the needs, and the vision of the event. This way, we achieved that the co-organisers became truly co-responsible (…)."

The networking & cooperation

Speaking about networking, the Spichlerz team concentrated on the quality and effectiveness of cooperation with the local organisations, the local authorities and the local community.   There were numerous local organisations, non-formal groups, local enterprises and local authorities involved in the process:

- The Gaszowice Commune gave the patronage; supported the promotion; lent the 'picnic' tables and benches to sit for the guests.
- The Astrohunters enterprise prepared the lecture about exploring the sky and a "search for the first star," making accessible one of the telescopes, answering all the questions about the astronomical observations.
- The Zameczek Culture House was preparing the surrounding park where the event took place, presenting the thematic groups meeting in the Zameczek (children, youth, seniors).
- The Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich "Czerniczanki" (The Village Womens' Circle) were responsible for planning, idea giving, and preparing cakes and cookies served to the guests.
- The local craftsmen prepared the Christmas decorations that could be bought during the Market. There were also some local food producers present with their products.
- The Village Mayor and the Village Council were responsible for promotion, concepts giving, and organisational works.
- The volunteers of the Association took care of the animation for the kids.
- The U-RWIS Association from the neighboring village organised the meeting with Santa Claus for the children.
- The Horyzonty Kultury Social Cooperative was responsible for promotion, running the cafe the day of the event, and organisational works.

All the partners were involved in the direct promotion of the event, using their channels of communication and advertising. The local media were concerned. At the end of the event, there was a concert by a local, well-known music band. All the space of the Castle and the surrounding the park was used.

One of the Association leaders summarises: "This common event would never have such a significance, dimension, and importance if not so many small, local, truly involved entities. This showed us it has a meaning and importance. The previous years the Christmas events were being organized in smaller partnerships; sometimes, we have been organizing it just on our own... This was the first time we cooperated so widely. It had a significant impact, resulted in many more participants of the event, a very positive receiving of the event; we have received many positive comments afterward, also in the media (…) I believe this success was possible mostly because of the genuine involvement of so many local partners."

It was agreed that the whole process of testing the renewed approach to designing, planning and realizing the community event, as inspired by the Benchmark Tool, will be

constantly monitored to catch the most important conclusions and highlights: At the very beginning, the expectations of the key - team of the organisers were recorded. In the middle of preparations, there was some reflection on the process in motion. In the end – there an evaluation meeting was realized.

Perspectives and recommendations

Asked what kind of changes have been identified through the consideration of the benchmark during the practice methods implementation in terms of the organisational structure, the programme and the networking and cooperation, the Spichlerz team summarises:

"Definitely, we noticed that sharing tasks and responsibility made our project richer. We had to involve more people, who represented all the partners in the decision-making process".

"The programme was created in cooperation. Some elements were added in the process, and some were excluded during the organization. We have built one event from many small parts; everyone was important. Our focus was on creating a complex event in partnerships".

"We have learned how to agree in different fields. The project included many small activities, which combined created an integral event. Every partner had its own "field of expertise," we all had to trust that our partners knew their task and were ready to do it correctly."

Among the solutions developed during the implementation of the new activities, the new way, that the Spichlerz team would like to keep for the future projects are: Believing in trusting the partners and allowing them to work in their mode; clear and constant communication; the practice of the regular meetings with the partners – open for discussing every phase of the next cooperations, exchanging ideas and propositions. The strategy of communication with the audience using multiples channels, based on various partners' communication paths, is also to be continued.

To summarise, the Benchmark Tool was appreciated most for having the rising awareness effect, giving the teams of the involved organisations a space to reflect on the current course of the activities – and thus opening space for changes.

3.4 Slovenian example – BOOST youth theatre in Novo Mesto

By Jan Pirnat, Javni sklad RS za kulturne dejavnosti (SI).

The initial idea behind *The Development of Practice Methods* was to use the Benchmark tool as the starting point of a project within amateur arts or voluntary culture activities; and as a control element – whether or not the adaptation to the program based on the Benchmark tool results have meaningful impact.

The final version of the Benchmark tool is divided into three topics (Program and activities, Structure of the organization, Networking and cooperation) while giving the respondents the self-evaluation on the levels of social inclusion, social cohesion, and promotion of democratic values. The Benchmark tool was used at various points of the Practice Methods development, as both an inspiration tool and the controlling (evaluating) element. Within the process, the Networking topic of the Benchmark tool became the focal point. [19]

The network behind the method

JSKD – The Public Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for Cultural Activities is a cultural network enabling omnidirectional communication between cultural societies (associations), local communities, 59 regional branch offices, the central professional service and state institutions. This network seeks to stimulate the development of youth and amateur art and culture. The central professional service is a part of the headquarters located in Ljubljana, and it consists of eight main departments, each specializing in different art forms. The programs run by JSKD departments include seminars for members of various cultural associations as well as for individuals who are interested in art and other creative processes. Festivals, competitions, seminars and workshops in different genres involve the participation of professional pedagogues, mentors and artists and active participation from participants. All the program activities from the headquarters are designed to have an overview of the state of the children, youth and adult amateur production and projects. From the beginning of the project, theatre and puppet theatre department was a part of the BOOST project in Slovenia.

The JSKD Novo mesto regional branch office operates in 8 municipalities, the biggest being the City Municipality of Novo mesto. The area has the population of a little over 65,000 residents, and there are over 100 cultural associations – around 50% of the amateur culture and art programs are actively co-created through the JSKD network. Yearly, they conduct more than 60 educational programs for children, youth and adults. In 2021 alone, more than 1,000 individuals were enrolled in educational programs.

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[19] See the video about the practice method with JSKD and Glej Theatre:
https://boostparticipation.eu/practice-methods-slovenia/

Gledališče "GLEJ" (GLEJ Theatre) is one of the oldest independent theatres in Ex-Yugoslavian countries. The focal point of "GLEJ"'s work is the community. It has transformed the role of the artistic director into an artistic collective where all decisions are made in democratic, non-hierarchical and collective ways. "GLEJ" is the place that produces artists, not just their works, a place where failure is an acceptable part of every process – because they learn from their mistakes – and risks are supported and encouraged as means of discovering things that are yet to be discovered. Experimenting with methodology, form and concept is a necessary predisposition of every artistic work produced in this "laboratory," as it is the process that is considered as far more interesting than the final product itself.

This theatre not only overcomes different genres and artistic fields, but deliberately destroys boundaries between them and searches for new forms of synergies while putting focus on devised theatre. This is the place where all the biggest Slovenian directors and actors premiered their first projects (and the process of raising and supporting new talents still continues), because here artists can step out of the box and create things that they cannot create elsewhere. Many people whose voices were taken from them encounter art for the first time here, since "GLEJ"'s educational programs in culture, whose main focus is on the youth, are a tool of empowerment. This is a theatre that believes in working together and has celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2020 and remains focused on the future.

The DRDP Novo mesto is an association for the development of voluntary work and is a non-governmental and humanitarian organization that works in the public interest in the fields of social protection, culture and youth. Their mission is to contribute to a more inclusive and open society for all, mainly by involving socially excluded groups in different activities. They have Day Centres for Children in Novo mesto, where they help children and young people who, for various reasons, have difficulty integrating into society. Currently, these are mainly immigrant children and Roma children. The centres are open every day for six hours, offering Slovenian language learning, teaching aids and a quality leisure program. They also help adults, who have access to counselling, information and all other support, so that they can become actively involved in society as soon as possible.

The startup phase

The initial scope of the method was determined by two prequel stages of the BOOST project: the Baseline report and the Benchmark tool. The premise behind the practice method(s) was that the learning providers who helped develop the Benchmark tool would adapt their activities according to the topics in the tool: structure of the organization, program and activities, networking and cooperation.

The learning provider (Gledališče "GLEJ") had a lot of experience in organizing youth theatre programs that were focused on social inclusion and active citizenship and on social cohesion, all three categories that the project would like to boost. Gledališče "GLEJ" is situated in Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital and one of the strongest culture activities sites in the country. They firmly believe in decentralization of the cultural offer and are seeking for national or regional roll out of their programs. The networking started with the

establishment of the link between two organizations: one being the learning provider (the know-how element) and the other having an interest to start a similar program in their local environment (JSKD Novo mesto). This connection also made sense to the theatre and puppet theatre department at JSKD headquarters, as they were noticing a creative vacuum in youth theatre of this region for a longer period. That made all three future stakeholders of the project highly motivated to work towards a common practice method.

The start-up meeting determined the course of action for the activity:

- Make the program available in a new (local) environment (removing the geographical barriers/lack of proximity – that is the third biggest reasons for people not participating in culture (Eurostat 2019))
- Adapt the program based on the response of the local participants
- Make program accessible to excluded groups

Audience development finds active participation

In the last 10 to 20 years, audience development was in the spotlight (that is even more true after the Covid-19 pandemic aftermath) for a lot of professional art organizations, and active participation in culture became one of the cornerstones of their efforts. Gledališče "GLEJ" has detected a generational gap in their audience structure, so they shifted their focus on trying to activate the youth, to bring theatre closer to a young audience. Through their extensive research in the frames of different EU projects, they were more and more convinced that devised theatre is the right formula to include youngsters into creative process.

Devised theatre - frequently called collective creation - is a method of theatre-making in which the script or (if it is a predominantly physical work) performance score originates from collaborative, often improvisatory work by a performing ensemble. (Wikipedia)

Bringing their stories and their opinions on the stage is what empowers participants to find ways on how to find and express their positions about the society at this day and age. Theatre programs in general, but devised theatre method (shaped to the needs of youngsters and tested through various EU projects) that was used in the series of workshops, has tremendous potential for active citizenship. It empowers participants to shape their own opinions and gives them the tools to eloquently articulate them.

The role of the JSKD network is to establish platforms to support associations and creative individuals to actively participate in different art productions in Slovenia. In 2014, they started the Student Theater program together with Gledališče "GLEJ" to boost student theater groups. The program has grown and found its purpose in all student cities in Slovenia (Ljubljana, Maribor, Nova Gorica, and Koper). JSKD Novo mesto expressed the desire to try to find ways to generate interest among the young population for theatre making. Young people are also the group that was struck the most in their social development during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The questions, whether such content is needed and could this program make it in the future (the sustainability aspect) were resolved in the start-up phase. The suggestions in the Benchmark tool and the experiences from the previous work by all three stakeholders dictated the format of the BOOST YOUTH THEATER IN NOVO MESTO. JSKD Novo mesto reached out to young participants of their other activities with an open call for theater workshops specifically designed for the youth. For promotion, they used the Boost logo, and the fact that the program is running on an international level as additional proof of quality.

The BOOST program in Novo mesto was a series of theater workshops (all workshops were based on devised theatre methods). The content and the learning provider of each of the workshops that followed were decided within the session (what type of theater/performing art would you like to try out). The first and the last workshops had a mentor that was proposed by "GLEJ", but with other workshops JSKD Novo mesto took the initiative to include professional artist from their local environment. The program was available in Novo mesto and all events were free of charge. Due to the Covid-19 situation, a lot of time and man-hours were spent to make the activities run on a regular basis as much as possible. Even though Covid-19 took a lot of opportunities from every age group, studies show that anxiety levels are rising specifically among this group, thus the built partnership wanted to further open the program to groups with fewer opportunities (this also increased the social capital of the method).

The general feeling by all stakeholders was that it would wrong to build inclusion programs for vulnerable groups in isolation (by excluding said vulnerable groups), so instead they opened the program by bringing a new partner into the network – DRPD Novo mesto, who works with the youth from migrant families, mostly those coming from Ex-Yugoslav countries. Bringing a new program for the youth to Novo mesto was not just audience development for a specific age group, but it was a precondition to boost social inclusion (first make the program available and then make it accessible). Bringing different groups of youngsters together into a creative art form program also makes a good environment for co-creation – a social cohesion element of the activity. The program was developed based on the Benchmark tool's topics: firstly, networking and cooperation, and secondly, the program and activities section, which was developed through adaptation based on both the needs of the local participants and the input by the local organizer. The project boosted active citizenship, social inclusion, and social cohesion.

The assessment by "GLEJ" discusses that the program that was established at "GLEJ" Theater was then successfully implemented at JSKD Novo mesto, while at the same the program was reshaped due to individual input from new participants. The developers of the program could see in practice how their methods can reach an even broader context and thus have a wider reach than they would have had only at "GLEJ" Theater.

Regarding networking and co-operation, the Boost project enabled partners with previous one directional ongoing relationship to reshape and become multidirectional, thus giving the stakeholders the chance to reach a different region and an organization working there, which they could not have accessed on the same level before. Changes of the program were included and manifested itself in the incorporation of participants who come from different backgrounds and have quite an age gap between them. That led the learning providers to

even further carefully attune the proposed methods and find some universal grounds that are of help and reference for future projects. Widening the network and developing deeper cooperation with organizations from different regions is a model of decentralization of cultural programs and also an outlet to test some of the existing methods that were recognized with the potential to boost social inclusion. Throughout the project it became clear that the program enables a rise in social competences which can then be used in everyday life of the participants.

Adaptation is the invention we need

The Boost project experience has imprinted the belief that making small changes to already existing solutions can have a bigger impact than starting everything from scratch. It is a well-known fact that people are less resilient to making smaller changes, and this is also what participants with fewer opportunities often want – to have their needs met and to be included in programs that are open to all participants. This was also the time to re-learn the lesson on Darwinian adaptation theory, as we all witnessed the Covid-19 virus adapting as means of survival and the same logic was applied to explain the development of species. Subjectively, this same logic can be applied when finding new ways to boost social inclusion in arts and culture.

The Benchmark tool can serve as a great starting point in the detection of areas that can be changed in order to improve the organizational aspects of project building and thus result in programs that are accessible to everyone who is willing to take the risk of being an active participant.

4. Impact assessment of the practice methods using the benchmark tool

By Oliver Löscher, EDUCULT - Denken und Handeln in Kultur und Bildung

4.1 The impact assessment

Not only the implementation but also the evaluation of the Practice Methods is essential to test the effectiveness of the Benchmark Tool and to make recommendations for future applications. In order to evaluate all four Practice Methods in Slovenia, Poland, Denmark and Ireland equally, we used a mixed-method approach consisting of open questions, an impact workshop and a questionnaire with the involvement of the partner organisations and representatives of the engaged learning providers.

First, we will explain the methodological approach and then, in a second step, we will look at transnational results and national specificities.

4.1.1 Methodology

In order to assess the impact, a three-dimensional methodological approach was chosen. On the one hand, this ensures qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the other hand, it guarantees that, in addition to the consulting partners EDUCULT and Interfolk, the accompanying project partners JSKD, FAIE, Creative Lives and Kulturelle Samråd, but above all the associated practice partners Stowarzyszenie Działań Lokalnych Spichlerz, Gledališče Glej, Take A Part Carlow, and The Cultural Council of Køge are also involved.

Monitoring

During the implementation of the practice methods, the consulting partners, EDUCULT and Interfolk, accompanied the respective partner organisations and practice partners and provided support. In order to qualitatively assess the results/impact, three questions were sent to all practice partners at the end of the implementation. These are structured along the Benchmark Tool categories and their answers provide a qualitative insight view to assess the impact:

1. What kind of changes have you identified through the consideration of the benchmark during the practice methods/implementing your project in terms of
   a. the organisational structure?
   b. the programme?
   c. networking and cooperation?

2. Which of these changes were particularly important for your organisational context and which new approaches have emerged from them?
3. What concrete adaptations/measures will you implement out of this?

Impact Assessment Workshop

The second step in this evaluation was a workshop with all four partner organisations that accompanied the Practice Partners during the Practice Methods in Poland, Slovenia, Denmark and Ireland. EDUCULT as lead partner of the Impact Assessment prepared/guided the workshop and the project coordinator Interfolk participated in an observational function.

The workshop was based on the "**Impact+ Tool**" method recommended by the European Commission[20] but was, however, adapted due to the special prerequisites of the Practice Methods. For this purpose, as preparation individual impacts/outcomes along the impact areas **"Organisation"**, **"Staff"** and **"Target Groups"** were defined, and indicators were allocated to these. For this purpose, the Benchmark Tool and its (sub-) categories and the respective answer options were used.

As the Benchmark Tool was developed in an evidence-based manner, the impact/outcomes and indicators of the assessment also corresponded to the results of the Baseline Survey conducted at the beginning of the project. The impact area "**Systemic**" proposed in the Impact+ Tool was not used in this procedure, as a long-term systemic impact was not measurable due to the comparatively short duration of the Practice Methods as well as the rather near-term evaluation. In the appendix you will find the individually developed questionnaire, which contains all impacts and indicators.

In the workshop itself, the project partners assessed the impact/outcomes of the accompanied Practice Methods in two groups according to the trilateral settings in which the Practice Methods were implemented. For this purpose, it was first defined whether each impact occurs in the short term, medium term or long term. Then, the priority of each impact was defined on a three-level scale "low, middle, and high". Finally, the value of the impact was assessed on a five-point scale from "1 = low" to "5 = high".

4.2 Quantitative transnational results

As a final step, the same questionnaire – which was used in the Impact Assessment Workshop – with detailed instructions was sent out to all Practice Partners together with the final monitoring questions.

Based on these methods, results from different national perspectives could be merged. The evaluation of the completed questionnaires showed that all practice partners had an impact on the levels **"Organisation", "Staff" and "Target Groups"** but to a very different degree.

Across organisations, the highest impact was achieved in the area of **"Organisation".** For example, in the internal decision-making processes at Glej and Take A Part Carlow, there has been a very high level of awareness-raising, which has taken place to a lesser extent in Denmark. In Ireland, Poland and Slovenia there was also a very strong reflection with regard

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to the exchange with the local community, which was not the case at the Cultural Council of Køge. Here, on the other hand, they were sensitised to use several media channels.

It is striking that the external assessment of the project partners in the impact assessment workshop differs significantly from the assessments of the practice partners in some parts, especially in the outcomes "Goals/Mission" and "Programme/Activities". The project partners stated that there had been rather little sensitisation for the "Goals/Missions". The Practice Partners, on the other hand, stated that a high to very high level of awareness had been achieved. In the case of programmes and activities, the project partners were clearly more convinced that high to very high reflection/adaptation had taken place, but this was only indicated as "medium" by the data from the Practice Partners. In the area of the short-, medium- and long-term analysis, the results were too different to be able to make a transnational statement.

In the following assessment areas **"Staff"** and **"Target Groups"** data from the Irish, Slovenian and Polish practice partners can be used for evaluation. Here, the data from Denmark is not sufficient for any deductions. In the area **"Staff"**, a high impact was achieved in Slovenia for all four outcomes and thus a very strong sensitisation through the BT in the individual areas took place among the employees of Glej. In Ireland, on the other hand, only a rather low-medium impact was achieved, whereby the employees of Take A Part Carlow were only slightly sensitised in the area of networking. The employees of Spichlerz in Poland, on the other hand, experienced a medium-high level of sensitisation, especially in networking and decision-making, and a rather low level of sensitisation for the initiation of critical social issues. The effects in this area tend to occur in the short- or medium- term across countries.

In the area of **"Target Groups"**, medium-high impacts were achieved across countries. At Glej, all five outcomes were rated as rather high, which means that the target groups were more involved, were better reached, were represented more often at events, benefited better and critical awareness was better stimulated. In the case of Take A Part Carlow, more people were reached, who were then better able to benefit from the activities. All other outcomes were rated "medium". And the target groups of Spichlerz were even much better reached and visited the activities much more often. All other outcomes were rated rather high here, except for the stimulation of critical awareness. Nevertheless, the BT in Poland had the greatest impact on the target groups. Transnationally, it is noticeable that the impacts in this area occurred rather short-term and were thus quickly visible for the Practice Partners.

4.3 Qualitative transnational results

The evaluation of the qualitative data has shown that the use of the Benchmark Tool has had an impact on all three levels **"Organisational Structure", "Programme" and "Networking & Cooperation"**, but to varying degrees in national comparisons. Overall, the following stood out: both the programme and the target groups as well as the cooperation and networking activities with local/regional partners were especially expanded. The highlights of the impacts achieved are presented below.

In terms of **Organisational Structure**, impact was on the one hand in Denmark at The Cultural Council of Køge achieved through the future aim to set up a committee dealing with

cooperation with schools. On the other hand, in Ireland at Take A Part Carlow as well: *"Our aim to make the organisational structure of Take A Part Carlow more diverse and inclusive. This will be an embedded and long-term developmental goal for the Take A Part Carlow Arts Action Group. It will be written in to the Take A Part Carlow Strategic Development Plan which is currently being developed as a core aim and objective of the organisation."*

The other two Practice Partners are already established in their structure and no formal changes were initiated by the BT here. But the Polish partner stated that they became more aware of meaning of their roles as members of the organisation and members of initiatives and thus strengthened their structure.

The **Programming** and thus the target groups have been expanded in all four partner countries. The Danish Practice Partner wants to work with children/young people as well as adults in the future and to address them through the programme initiated by an action plan. Take A Part Carlow wants to involve the community more in order to increase engagement and participation. Glej, the Slovenian Practice Partner, through the use of BT, has found that new target groups with different backgrounds can be addressed, included and also equipped with social skills: *"We also saw that the programme enables a rise in social competences which can be then used in everyday life of participants."* The Polish Practice Partner SPichlerz has also made adaptations in this category through the project partnership: *"In programme planning we paid attention to offering content, activity etc. to every social and age group. We want to offer something to everyone interested in participating in our events."*

In the area of **Networking & Cooperation**, for all Practice Partners an impact was achieved. In Denmark, the aim is now to collaborate with institutions that address children and thus work directly with schools and school classes in order to achieve a long-term bonding: *"By working with children who have no knowledge of the local cultural association life, we achieve better that they also as adults participate in our activities for the benefit of inclusion in and dissemination of art and culture".*

In Ireland, the partner will push working collaboratively with community representatives, artists, and stakeholder partners to deliver high quality socially engaged art. Similarly, collaborations will be developed at local, national and European level. In Slovenia, concrete goals for action were identified in relation to this category: *"Widening our network and developing deeper cooperation with organisations from different regions. Working with participants in a transgenerational environment."* In Poland, it was mainly the level of local cooperation that was addressed, as the inclusion of local partners and communities in the planning of activities is essential for successful implementation and addressing target groups.

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Appendix: The applied impact assessment questionnaire

Instruction for the Impact Assessment of the Practice Methods

Erasmus+ project "BOOST – Boost Social Inclusion in Amateur Arts and Voluntary Culture"

Dear Practice Partners of the BOOST project,
first of all, thank you very much for implementing the Practice Methods in Denmark, Ireland, Poland and Slovenia! Hopefully, the engagement in our project could boost your activities.
In order to evaluate your methods, we developed a simple procedure which consists of a qualitative and quantitative part.

1. **Qualitative: Please answer the following questions with at least 100 words per answer.**

   1) What kind of changes have you identified through the consideration of the benchmark during the practice methods/implementing your project in terms of
      a. the organisational structure?
      b. the programme?
      c. networking and cooperation?
   2) Which of these changes were particularly important for your organisational context and which new approaches have emerged from them?
   3) What concrete adaptations/measures will you implement out of this?

2. **Quantitative: Please fill in the attached questionnaire.**

The attached questionnaire is an impact assessment. It measures the impact/outcomes of your Practice Methods on the three levels "organisation", "staff" and "Target Groups". The effects/outcomes are already predefined. These can be read on the basis of indicators, which are also predefined. An indicator is a sign or signal that shows something exists or is true, or that makes something clear:

Your task is now to classify and evaluate the individual impacts/outcomes (No 1. – No. 21) according to the following procedure:

   1) Please describe the data source (observations, statistics, measurements, etc.) through which the impact/outcome is shown.
   2) Please define whether the impact/outcome through the Practice Methods will be realised short-term, medium-term or long-term. You can choose here up two options.
   3) Please define the priority "high/middle/low" of the impact/outcome. (e.g. How important is the impact/outcome?)
   4) Finally, please assess the predefined impact "5-high/4/3/3/1-low".

   2.1 Fictitious example as an illustration (also to be seen in the questionnaire)

A new teaching method is introduced in a school and now the Impact/Outcome is "Increased participation in school lessons" shall be assessed. This can be measured by the indicators "more hand signals in class", "better homework performance", "less absenteeism" and "more lively discussions". The observations of the teachers are used as the data source for the evaluation. In our fictitious example, this impact/outcome would be middle- and long-term, as a new teaching method does not have an immediate effect, but takes time to implement. Nevertheless, first good results have been shown in our fictitious school and therefore we rate this impact with "4".

Level	Impact / Outcome	Indicators	Data sources	Short-term I	Short-term II	Medium-term I	Medium-term II	Long-term I	Long-term II	Priority I	Priority II	Assessment Group I	Assessment Group II
Systemic													
Organisations	The organisation is more sensitized to the importance of its goals/ mission considering social benefits.	. focus on inclusion/ cohesion/ active citizenship (i/c/a) in the goals . focus on i/c/a in the mission statement . a procedure to monitor the i/c/a developments/changes											
	The organisation is more sensitized to their own decision-making processes.	. people involved in the organisation are considered . meetings to reflect if goals are achieved . feedback culture with participants . local community members involved											
	The organisation is more sensitized to their own planning processes.	. activities planned in a participatory manner . invitation to give feedback . inclusion in decision-making and planning processes											
	The organisation is more sensitized to social sustainability.	. sustainability considered in planning . measures for long-term continuation . participants becoming volunteers or employees . opportunities for further growth and education of team members											
	The organisation is more sensitized to the importance of exchange with other organisations	. networking with organisations that work with people with fewer opportunities . networking with organisations that work with similar target groups . networking with organisations that work with different target groups . linking other organisations with one another . cooperation on an international or European level											
	The organisation is more sensitized to its team structure. / The organisation is more sensitized to the diversity of their team /members.	. people with fewer opportunities in decision-making processes . people with fewer opportunities in leadership roles . balance in terms of gender . ethnical diversity . intergenerational diversity											
	The organisation is more sensitized to their outreach activities.	. exchange between different social groups . groups with fewer opportunities . activities in different languages											
	The organisation is more sensitized to use different media channels.	. different channels used . social media activities for different groups . social media activities for people with fewer opportunities . regular outreach to (local) media											
	The organisation is more sensitized how they implement their programme actitivies.	. low-threshold price policy . diverse audience . positive effect for individual participants . positive effect for community . high participatory level . evaluation of effect . regular offer . length/ duration of activities . raising new questions for participants . tackling critical social issues . tactful and sensible language											
	The organisation is more sensitized to the location(s) of its programme acitivies.	. attractiveness of location to different social groups . attractiveness of location to people with fewer opportunities . accessibility of location(s) . changing locations . outdoor events											
	The organisation is more sensitized to the importance of exchanging with the local community.	. cooperation with organisations from local community . organisation of local community events											
	The organisation is more sensitized to the importance of exchanging with the government.	. regular exchange with local/ regional government . regular exchange with national government											
Staff	The staff is more sensitized to act and plan in a social responsible way.	. sustainability considered in planning . measures for long-term continuation . participants becoming volunteers or employees . opportunities for further growth and education of team members											
	The staff is more sensitized to take part in decision making.	. people involved in the organisation are considered . meetings to reflect if goals are achieved . feedback culture with participants . local community members involved											
	The staff is more sensitized to initiate discussions on critical social issues.	. activities raise new (innovative) questions and perspectives . activities raise questions and open discussions on important and critical social issues . use tactful and sensible language s											
	The staff is more sensitized to integrate networking as part of their job.	. regular exchange with government . regular exchange with other organisations . regular exchange with community											
Target Groups	More target groups are reached through the outreach of the organisation.	. exchange between different social groups . groups with fewer opportunities . activities in different languages											
	More target groups are involved in the planning.	. activities planned in a participatory manner . invitation to give feedback . inclusion in decision-making and planning processes											
	More target groups are visiting locations of activities.	. attractiveness of location to different social groups . attractiveness of location to people with fewer opportunities . accessibility of location(s) . changing locations . outdoor events											
	Target groups benefit better from the activities.	. low-threshold price policy . diverse audience . positive effect for individual participants . positive effect for community . high participatory level . evaluation of effect . regular offer . length/ duration of activities . raising new questions for participants . tackling critical social issues . tactful and sensible language											
	Among the target groups critical awareness is more stimulated.	. people involved in the organisation are considered . meetings to reflect if goals are achieved . feedback culture with participants . local community members involved											
										high middle low	high middle low	1 - low 2 3 4 5 - high	

Manual for the Benchmark Tool and Practice Methods

The Manual 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 aim of the BOOST project is to support key actors in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage to work more consciously with promoting social inclusion, social cohesion, and active citizenship.

This Manual presents the developed Benchmark Tool and Practice Methods that can support the self-reflection of the actors on their potential for fostering societal benefits by implementing changes in their organisational structure, programme and activities, or in their networking with other actors in the field.