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FEEDBACK ANALYSIS OVER THE PILOTING OF ART-BASED WORKSHOPS

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Introduction

The Art in Transition project conducted several art-based workshops with youth groups across Europe, including Ireland, Italy and North Macedonia. The aim was to support young people during transitional phases by building skills like tolerance, responsibility and assertiveness through creative expression. This report summarizes the key aspects and recommendations from pilot workshops conducted in the three countries as part of the project.

The adolescent years are characterized by multiple transitions as young people start asserting their independence and shaping their identity. However, they may lack the skills to navigate choices around relationships, education, career etc. Art provides a powerful medium of self-expression and healing during turbulent times. The Art in Transition workshops tapped into this potential of art activities to build socio-emotional skills like tolerance, responsibility and assertiveness in youth.

Overview of Workshops

The activities were designed by the youth workers that have participated to the training course in Skopje from July 3rd to 7th.

There, the participants exposed their workshop having a peer review. After this, the goal was to pilot each other activities in their own countries once they got back from North Macedonia.

The workshops were allocated as follow:

Training Academy, Italy

- Sociability Workshop: Participants created individual art pieces representing kindness, respect etc. and collaborated to make a group poster. This activity aimed to build sociability by working together.
- Responsibility Workshop: Groups enacted scenes about making responsible choices around drugs, alcohol and commitments. The spontaneous collaboration was appreciated but more preparation time could have enhanced the artistic component.

Arteteka, Ireland

- Tolerance Workshop: Participants shared meaningful songs and created related drawings, followed by a group discussion. This workshop promoted acceptance of diverse perspectives.
- Assertiveness Workshop: The concept of assertiveness was introduced before participants made comic strips showing assertive behavior. Roleplays strengthened understanding.

MAAP, North Macedonia

- Trust Workshop: A blindfolded drawing activity was conducted to build trust in fellow participants. It pushed participants out of their comfort zone.
- Stress Resistance Workshop: Interpretations of a garden were drawn using colors to depict emotions during stress. It promoted healthy coping.

Idee in Movimento, Italy



- Empathy Workshop: Collaborative storytelling activity to illustrate empathy. Participants appreciated the teamwork opportunity.
- Persistence Workshop: Artworks with layers represented goals, barriers and motivations. It focused on perseverance.

Feedback analysis

In total, across the countries, the young people participating to the workshop managed by the youth workers in each country were 23.

The gender balance was guaranteed, with the participation of 12 men and 11 women.

The feedback form was submitted to the participants before and after the workshop.

Pre activity feedback

Prior to the activity a basic survey was given to the participants. In this survey the questions were about the level of study, what transition period(s) were they experiencing or have they recently experienced, how much familiarity they had with arts and previous experiences about them, how they perceived the connection between engaging in artistic activities and mental well-being during times of transition, what role art can have in helping people deal with change and transitions, which artistic mediums they were most interested in exploring during the activity and why, what their expectations or goals for participating in the art-based activity was and how it could have been good for facing mental health issues, how comfortable they were expressing themselves through art, if there were any specific concerns or challenges that they expected to encounter while practicing art and a last question relative to the effort that they were ready to put in the workshop development.

It can be important to start the analysis from the last question, because it can say a lot about the fears and expectations of these young people about the activity. The majority, indeed, replied with a “maybe” (64.3%) when only 35.7% answered “yes”.

This data makes us understand that the youth needs stimulus to be participative and that a trust environment is essential to develop whatever activity with this target.

Talking about the target, the respondents ranged in age from teenagers to young adults. Most were high school students, with some in junior high and some in university.

This connects us to the answer of the second last question where the majority of the participants expressed concerns about the difficulties that they could find developing the workshop, underlining a general malaise that youngsters facing transition periods can experience.

About this, we must underline that the main transitions that the participants were facing at the moment of the workshop were related mainly to:

- Educational change (transition from High School to University);
- Environment change (moving from a city or a country to another).

In general, it can be said that the most commonly reported transition period was finishing secondary school and preparing to start university. Other transitions mentioned were moving to a new city, finishing college, and starting a new job.

About the familiarity with arts, the data appeared it's very interesting. While this generation is seen from outside like a generation that can easily have access to everything, only the 14.3% indicated a full familiarity. The majority (35.7%) preferred to indicate a good but not perfect knowledge. It is, instead, negligible the data of people answering that they don't know nothing at all about arts. In particular, in terms of familiarity with different art forms, most respondents rated themselves

as moderately familiar, choosing 3 out of 5. A few reported being very familiar with art, rating themselves 5 out of 5. Only one respondent said they were not at all familiar, rating themselves 1 out of 5.

The youngsters that affirmed to have experience with forms of art, indicated mainly music and painting.

Summarizing, the questionnaire responses show that the target audience of teenagers and young adults are going through expected life transitions like finishing school and starting college or a career. Most have a moderate level of familiarity with art, suggesting they have some art experience but still have room to learn. The data validate that an art activity focused on supporting transitions would have been relevant for this group.

Post activity feedback

As we have seen, the pre-activity survey analysis provided helpful baseline insights into the target audience of teenagers and young adults undergoing transitions. It revealed most had moderate familiarity with art and some concerns about fully engaging in the planned activity.

The post-activity responses validate that the art-based workshop resonated strongly with participants and achieved key goals. Specifically, the activity supported wellbeing during transitions by helping the participants to express their emotions, understand themselves and others better, and find meaning in art.

Looking deeper we can say that:

- In the pre-activity survey, most rated their art familiarity as moderate. The post-activity feedback suggests the workshop increased appreciation and understanding of art's value for some participants. Several commented that the activity helped them better express themselves through art.

- The pre-activity analysis expected the workshop could support wellbeing during transitions. The post-activity ratings and feedback strongly validate this hypothesis - most said the activity met or exceeded expectations for supporting their wellbeing and development during a transition. Specific ways the activity supported wellbeing include helping participants identify and express emotions, gain self-confidence, understand themselves and others better, and find meaning through art. This aligns closely with the intent of the activity.
- In the pre-activity survey, some expressed hesitations about fully engaging in the workshop. However, the post-activity feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Most used words like "fun", "engaging", "helpful" to describe the activity. This implies it overcame initial concerns. The depth of the post-activity feedback suggests the activity facilitated meaningful self-reflection for many participants. Some shared personal insights about using art to process emotions, trauma, or find purpose.
- Some respondents offered ideas to improve future workshops, like longer sessions, different art forms, more instruction for beginners. This constructive feedback can help build on the activity's success.

We can say at this point that the analysis of the post-activity questionnaire reveals that the art-based workshop deeply resonated with its target transitional audience. It achieved intended goals of increasing wellbeing, self-understanding, and art appreciation. Comparing the pre and post-activity data illustrates an engaging activity that transformed initial hesitations into highly positive experiences with meaningful impacts for its teenage and young adult participants.

Conclusion

Following the analysis of the feedbacks of the workshops activity, part of the core of the goals of Art in Transition, it can be useful to make some recommendation. It is important, indeed, to create a sort of guide for next activities of the same kind. Here we can provide some points that must be treated in order to develop a good workshop:

- Allocate sufficient preparation time for performances to boost artistic quality
- Incorporate diverse art forms including painting, body art, clay work etc.
- Link art activities to targeted skills through guided discussions
- Adapt activities for special needs of certain vulnerable youth groups

Said so, we can easily state that the Art in Transition workshops provided a creative and engaging way for youth groups to develop critical socio-emotional competencies through art. While the activities were impactful overall, enhancing the artistic components and guided reflection will make them even more effective. The project demonstrates how art can be a valuable tool to support young people during transitional life stages, making the work done in this month extremely fruitful.