A Methodological Concept for arts-led Social Action Projects in non-formal adult and community education settings. (IO1)

Guidelines to follow the #motivate2createEU project co-operation processes and its methodologies.

Motivate to create

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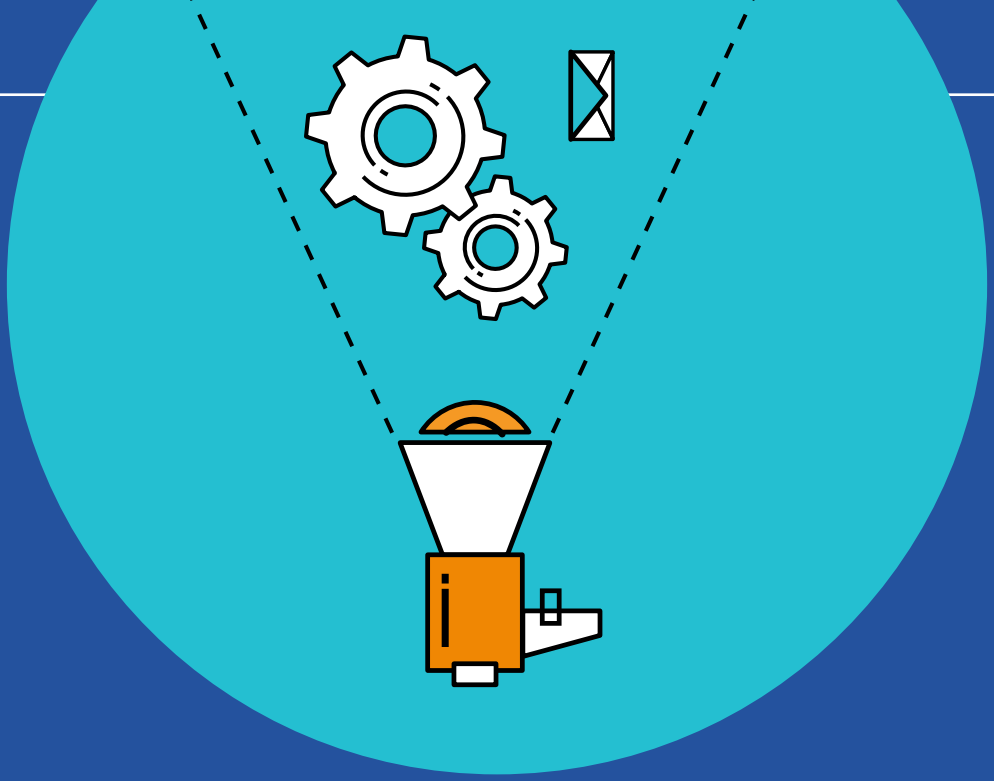

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Aims to

Foster creativity

Nurture talent

To act as

A catalyst for changes within a community

Through 'place-based' neighbourhood development

Combines

The traditions and values of Europe's community

EU community and participatory arts practice Social Action Projects (SAPs)

To generate

A suite of integrated learning activities, tools, resources and courses for adult and community education.

Background

Motivate to Create (M2C) aims to foster creativity and nurture talent, generated through participatory artistic and creative processes, supported by innovative learning methods that will draw out the expression and creativity of all groups and ages in society, to act as a catalyst for changes within a community through 'place-based' neighbourhood development. Co-funded by the EU's Erasmus+ programme, M2C combines the traditions and values of Europe's community and participatory arts practice with Social Action Projects (SAPs) to generate a suite of integrated learning activities, tools, resources and courses for adult and community education.

M2C contributes to three Erasmus+ priorities, namely:

- **Skills Development and Inclusion through Creativity and the Arts**, by exploring how community and participatory arts (CPA), when combined with SAPs, can generate a suite of integrated learning activities, tools, resources and courses for adult and community education.
- **Common Values, Civic Engagement and Participation**, through the fostering of participatory and intercultural dialogue and inclusion that empowers communities to create and participate in arts-led creative solutions to social challenges.
- **Social Inclusion**, by developing learning approaches which are holistic, driven by learners' interests, embedded in the local community and implemented in learning environments where participants are treated as equals, thus contributing to engaging and empowering the most vulnerable.

The first output of the project (IO1) is a 'methodological concept', establishing a common and systematic European approach and a 'common language' for the concept and design of arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings. **The methodological concept should be useful both to M2C partners and to other future users, by presenting guidelines which can be used sustainably within diverse non-formal learning settings, deepening linkages between non-formal adult education and**

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Motivate to Create (M2C) aims to foster creativity and nurture talent, generated through participatory artistic and creative processes, supported by innovative learning methods that will draw out the expression and creativity of all groups and ages in society, to act as a catalyst for changes within a community through 'place-based' neighbourhood development.

community arts practice. Given the diversity of contexts where the methodology may be applied, the concept aims to provide a common framework while enabling flexibility and adaptability to diverse conditions.

The methodological concept was initially drafted by CEPS Projectes Socials and involved discussions with the other 5 project partners: Rinova Ltd., MateraHub, Urbani Separe, Regionalna Rozovojova Agentura Senec- Pezinok, and Rosetta Art Centre. It drew on the Contribution Forms filled in by each partner, indicating their expectations and plans regarding the implementation of local SAPs, as well as on contributions made at the first partner meeting held in Rijeka in October 2021. The initial draft informed the set of local consultations undertaken by partners from Croatia, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and the UK, in November – December 2021, which included interviews with 49 stakeholders who design and implement SAPs involving participatory artistic and creative processes in their respective countries, regions and cities.[1] The methodological concept has been revised in January 2022, on the basis of the reports resulting from these consultations and subsequent discussions with partners.

If you are an arts practitioner, social educator, community worker, project manager, or anybody who wishes to implement a Social Action Project, then please read on and discover the #motivate2create 'methodological concept', which we hope will help you and your community to organize and fully take advantage of the process.

1 M2C has elaborated a range of materials for these consultations, including a sample questionnaire, which are available separately for other organisations interested in conducting similar exercises.

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Arts-led Social Action Projects in non-formal adult and community education settings

"Skills Development and Inclusion through Creativity and the Arts"

a) What is a Social Action Project?

A Social Action Project (SAP) is an educational process implemented in a neighbourhood or community setting, with the aim of helping members of the community in need. It combines learning and social goals and frequently has 'structured learning outcomes' (SLOs), i.e., a detailed identification, in the design phase, of the learning that participants are expected to achieve throughout the learning process.

SAPs are based on the idea that people are willing to participate to help others in need and that there is value and benefit from learning about social issues in local and global communities. The implementation of SAPs often involves volunteer work, alongside other forms of community services. It is also generally understood as a 'multi-step' learning process, with successive phases of educational and social engagement.

SAPs share traits with a range of other methodologies related to community, social and cultural participation. M2C's understanding is that adopting elements from a SAP approach can contribute to enriching local projects and support learning among both project managers and end beneficiaries.

b) M2C's approach to SAPs

SAPs can implement different methodologies and involve different groups. In the specific context of **M2C, which focuses on arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings**, the following aspects are distinctive:

- **A focus on community and participatory arts (CPA)**: M2C emphasises the potential of active participation in cultural life as a form of learning, empowerment and social engagement. This draws on the tradition of CPA, a wide set of practices which challenge traditional barriers between professional artists and other participants in creative processes, and which engage participants not only in isolated activities but more broadly, including in how projects are conceived. Central to CPA are a focus on arts as a process, with less emphasis paid to tangible outputs (i.e., the art work), as well as the strong dependence on contexts – i.e., the fact that projects will be designed by and adapted to specific communities and circumstances.

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- **Engagement of cultural and creative actors**: in line with the focus on CPA, M2C involves the participation of artists, cultural professionals and other cultural and creative organisations, recognising both their specific skills and capacities and how their expertise can contribute to the achievement of learning and social goals and the related SLOs.
- **Cross-disciplinary approaches**: M2C SAPs operate at the nexus of learning, cultural participation and social or community development. At their best, they involve professionals from different disciplines and recognise their potential contribution to educational, social and cultural objectives. Because of the sophisticated, highly-contextual nature of SAPs, skills related to consultation, interpretation of the local context, and collaboration are particularly important – indeed, 'soft skills' probably take precedence over 'hard skills'.
- **The andragogy methodology**: M2C focuses on adult learning and, as such, its methodology is based on 'andragogy' – that is, a form of learning specifically designed for adults. Andragogy assumes that adult learning should focus more on the process and less on the content being taught. It also recognises that adults are motivated by different forms of learning, which should inspire the educational approaches: adults need to know why they need to learn something; they expect to be responsible for their own decisions ('self-concept'); what they already know and have done impacts how they learn; they become ready to learn when they need to know or do something; they are life-centred rather than subject-centred; and internal motivators are more effective than external ones. While adult learning is central to M2C, evidence shows that facilitators and project managers often work simultaneously with children, young people and adults in different settings. Some projects may also simultaneously involve young people and adults.
- **A participatory approach**: in keeping with the andragogy methodology and the centrality of adult learning, it is important to involve learners as active contributors to the design of projects. This includes a consultation phase, where participants can help identify their needs and contribute to the project design, as well as a 'horizontal' methodology throughout, where participants in learning activities (i.e., 'end beneficiaries') take control of their own learning and development.

To sum up, the combination of social action (the SAP methodology), creative and cultural engagement (through a CPA approach) and an andragogy approach defines the distinctive methodology proposed by M2C.

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c) Who do they involve?

Three different levels of participation can be identified, as follows:

- **End beneficiaries**: Who is ultimately expected to benefit from the implementation of SAPs? These are typically disadvantaged, hard to reach or under-represented communities or groups. The participatory nature of SAPs and the M2C methodology means that end beneficiaries will also be engaged in consultation as well as in the implementation of SAPs. Indeed, the design of SAPs, including the setting of SLOs, should actively involve their end beneficiaries, rather than being established top-down. End beneficiaries may include, among other groups, young people from diverse cultural backgrounds and disadvantaged social and economic conditions; migrant women; prisoners; victims of domestic violence; young people not in education, employment or training; and other kinds of disadvantaged adults.
- **Facilitators and project managers**: Arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings are typically coordinated and facilitated by community artists, adult and community education (non-formal) tutors and other community workers. Since these projects have a highly cross-disciplinary nature, facilitators may come from different professional backgrounds and tend to require network-brokering and collaborative skills. Skills related to observation, facilitation, mediation and conflict management are very important as well, as is the ability to flexibly adapt projects to changing circumstances. More specifically, profiles involved in the management of projects of this nature may include community artists and artists working with prisoners and migrants, community workers, staff in voluntary, community and faith-based organisations working with disadvantaged young people, freelance socially engaged artist educators and tutors, and staff in social and educational associations organising artistic and leisure activities. They may be part of the staff of an organisation or work on a freelance basis. In some cases, they may operate on a voluntary basis, although this is not the most frequent case.
- **Other stakeholders**: What other individuals, organisations and agents are relevant or affected by the project? They can be involved in the consultation process leading to the design of a SAP, as well as informed of its development and results. These stakeholders may typically include umbrella organisations gathering non-profit associations, arts organisations, local authorities, other youth and community workers, NGOs, community radios, informal civic initiatives, etc.

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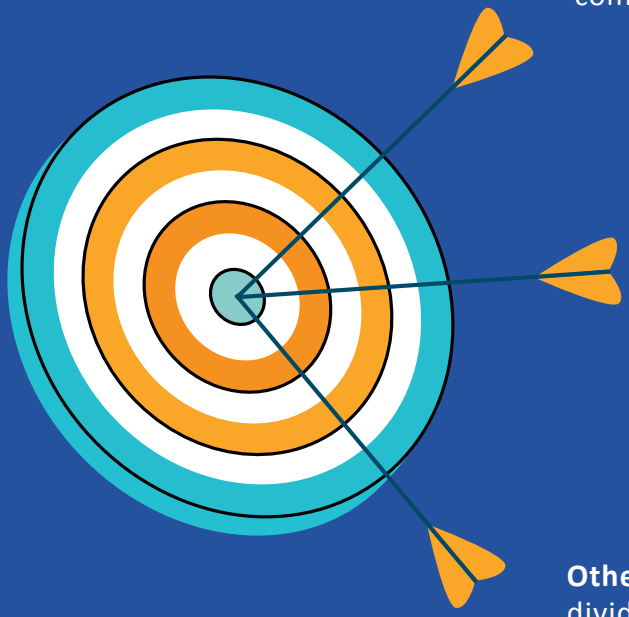

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Other stakeholders: What other individuals, organisations and agents are relevant or affected by the project? These stakeholders may typically include umbrella organisations gathering non-profit associations, arts organisations, local authorities, other youth

"Social Inclusion, holistic learning approaches, empowering the community."

d) Features

How should arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings unfold? The following aspects aim to provide guidance on the methodological development of projects, combining some common guidelines while ensuring flexibility and adaptation:

- **Duration:** a SAP could last up to 6-8 months altogether when considering its consultation, design and implementation phases. However, the activities requiring an active involvement of beneficiaries (e.g., workshops, meetings, activities leading to a creative production) will generally be shorter and should be adapted to each specific context. In some cases, the active involvement of participants may be concentrated in only a few days, in others in a few weeks or in 2-3 months, which could involve varying intensities (e.g. one week of daily work followed by one or two weekly sessions thereafter). Determining this may depend, among other things, on the availability of participants – e.g., young people involved over their summer holidays would only be available for a limited number of weeks (which may be different depending on the school calendar in each country).
- **Consultation:** in line with the participatory nature of SAPs and the need to adapt learning methodologies to the interests and characteristics of participants, a consultation process should be integrated in all projects. This should take place before the final design of activities, and should involve the participation of end beneficiaries, project facilitators or managers and some external stakeholders. Insofar as possible, the consultative approach should remain valid throughout the project's lifetime, identifying other opportunities where beneficiaries and participants can be consulted.
- **Concept design:** on the basis of the initial consultation, a design of the SAP should emerge. Ideally, this should include SLOs, but can also include objectives related to the social/community and artistic/cultural/creative dimension of projects, thus reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings. It is important to ensure that end beneficiaries are aware of and somehow see themselves represented in the concept design, rather than this being seen as external to them. Given the diverse nature of participants and the importance of tailored approaches, projects should integrate flexible methodologies, that are inclusive of diverse individuals and communities. While the concept design may remain open to revision on the basis of emerging needs or contextual changes, having a well-designed project can contribute to its effective implementation, and can also facilitate fundraising and other forms of support.
- **Implementation**: combining a learning and an applied dimension, the implementation phase represents the central part of SAPs. The nature of activities here can range widely, in accordance with the nature of beneficiaries, each project's spe-

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How should arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings unfold? Some aspects aim to provide guidance on the methodological development of projects, combining some common guidelines while ensuring flexibility and adaptation.

cific goals and the results of the consultation phase. At the same time, a creative component, a participatory nature and an integration of the andragogy methodology are common to all M2C SAPs. Also, common here is the understanding that learning emerges from active, hands-on or 'experiential' engagement by the project's 'end beneficiaries', rather than being abstract. Among the activities that can serve to implement a SAP are a creative production process leading to a video; creative arts workshops in community spaces, leading to the production of murals, videos, photos or stories; theatre activities and plays, discussion groups, planning labs; artistic interventions in public space, involving neighbours and artists; interpretive walks-performances, film screenings and exhibitions; and other forms of audiovisual, digital or face-to-face workshops and participatory activities. Frequently, the implementation of projects will lead to a form of public presentation or a creative production which can be shown (e.g., audiovisual productions, creative works, public participatory events)

- **Evaluation**: each SAP should comprise an evaluation component, conducted throughout the implementation of activities and/or at its end. Ideally, a sample of participants similar to that of the consultation phase should be involved, necessarily involving the 'end beneficiaries' who have been involved in the process. Likewise, some of the techniques used in the consultation (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, online surveys) could be used here as well.

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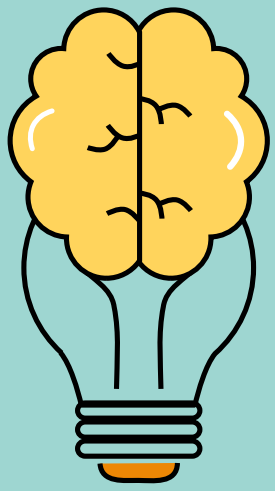
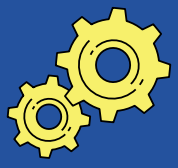


Features

Duration
In general it is recommended that the activities requiring an involvement of beneficiaries are concentrated in time.

Consultation
Should remain valid throughout the project's lifetime, identifying other opportunities where beneficiaries and participants can be consulted.

Concept design
It is important to ensure that end beneficiaries are aware of and somehow see themselves represented in the concept design, rather than this being seen as external to them.



Implementation
Frequently, the implementation of projects will lead to a form of public presentation or a creative production which can be shown.

Evaluation
Each SAP should comprise an evaluation component, conducted throughout the implementation of activities and/or at its end.

M2C partners believe that the adoption of arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings can be beneficial.

e) What's the added value of SAPs? Why use this methodology?

M2C partners believe that the adoption of arts-led SAPs in non-formal adult and community education settings can be beneficial because, among other things:

- SAPs can enable end beneficiaries, project managers and other stakeholders to openly discuss existing needs, agree on the goals of projects and monitor their results.
- Clearly formulating objectives and expected outcomes, including SLOs, and designing projects through active consultation with participants, can open up opportunities to access external funding.
- Participants in SAPs can develop skills which they will be able to use in a range of other educational and professional contexts.
- Where SLOs are connected to educational contexts, they may be recognised as credits in formal education.
- Project managers involved in SAPs often identify the need (for themselves or their end-beneficiaries) of developing a set of soft skills, including project management, team-building or problem-solving. The learning resources elaborated in the context of M2C can enhance the skills in these areas, as explained above.

This M2C Methodological Concept has been designed to introduce both the theory and practice of arts-led SAPs to organisations and professionals who are active in the fields of supporting communities through education, arts and social development. The M2C 'suite' of results also comprises a set of publicly-accessible resources - including learning materials, an online learning curriculum and a 'pocket guide' for community leaders. To find out more about these resources and their availability, visit https://www.motivate-tocreate.eu/

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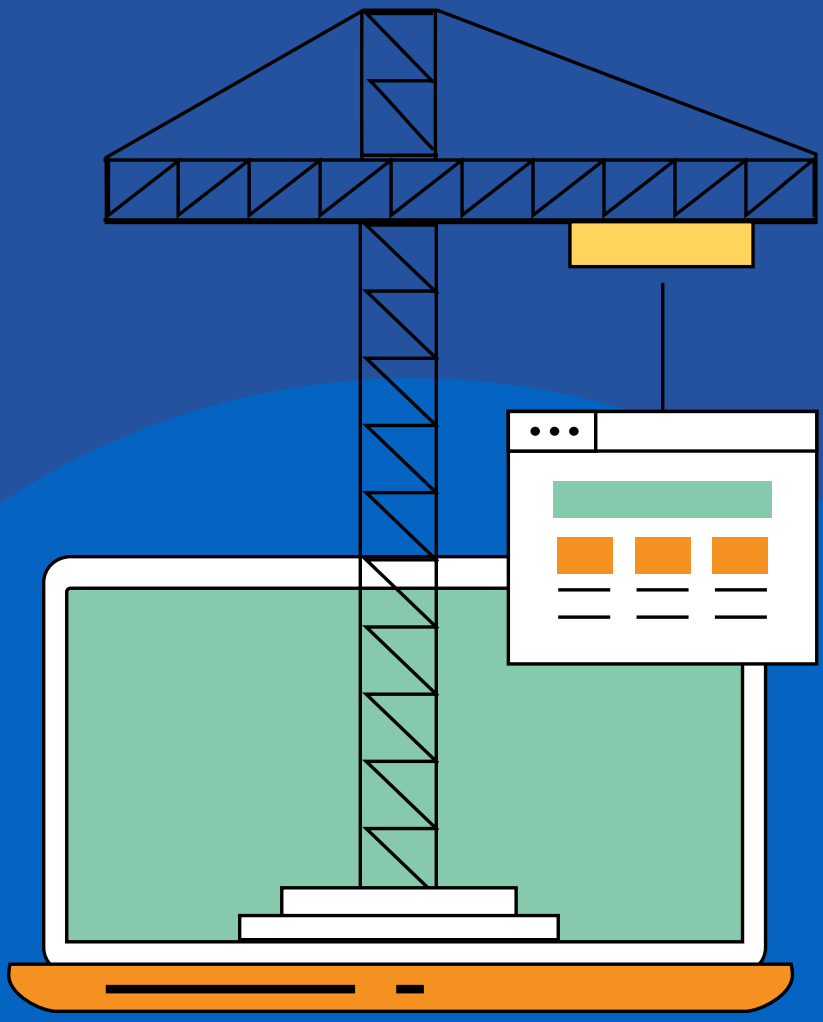

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