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TRAINING PROGRAMME | MODULE 6
CULTURE AND ARTS:
Traditions/Heritage/Culture Identity Promotion



Erasmus+

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years art and cultural activities have become more and more recognized also in the field of social and health services. This is based on the belief that arts and culture affect people's wellbeing and health.

Bringing cultural activities and services accessible and available to as many as possible cannot be achieved under only professional guidance. Cooperation between many agents is needed.

This training module aims at giving guidelines and suggesting ways for volunteers on how to use arts and culture in voluntary work with different kinds of groups such as children, disabled people, immigrants, senior citizens etc.

We want to emphasize the possibility of change and adaptation of these suggestions according to the volunteers' skills and interests, and the needs of each target group.

The aim is that the volunteers acknowledge and recognize that cultural interests have an influence on people's wellbeing, physical and mental health, learning and creativity.

"Art is an effort to create, beside the real world, a more humane world."

Andre Maurois

2. WHAT IS CULTURE?

The concept of culture cannot be defined in only one way. The word brings to mind various fields of culture like music, fine arts and literature, which are often referred to as high culture. On the other hand, the word is used in everyday language about almost all human activity; we speak about business culture or political culture. Then "culture" means about the same as all manners of behaviour that man has learnt. Culture is associated with everything that has to do with man-made environment. In the broadest sense of the word culture is everything that is transmitted from one generation to the next in any other way but genetically.

This presentation speaks about cultural activity meaning practicing and pursuing different kinds of arts, offering and using cultural services, preserving and enhancing local history, maintaining local and national traditions and our common heritage in general.

Aims and ways to reach the goals

Knowledge

When we deal with such a wide concept as culture within a not very comprehensive training, both facilitators and volunteers already have a lot of knowledge and skills in many different fields of culture. Also, the target groups, e.g. senior citizens, have a lot of cultural knowledge. The aim is that the volunteers acknowledge and recognize that cultural interests have an influence on people's wellbeing, physical and mental health, learning and creativity.

Skills

The volunteers will know how to reach various forms of culture and increasing cultural knowledge and the ways how to bring culture available to people, especially in their own town and environment. Because of the comprehensiveness and quality of the topic the emphasis is on producing recreation, stimulus, entertainment and experiences.

Attitudes

The volunteers' own positive and open attitude towards culture is very important in order to be able to make culture accessible to others. Culture is a very personal and delicate subject because values are at the core of culture, and values vary greatly from culture to culture. The volunteer should avoid a black-and-white way of thinking and try to approach culture without prejudices and be prepared to appreciate different opinions and likings. The volunteer must be conscious of cultural differences. For instance, learning about immigrants' culture helps to increase mutual

understanding. The facilitators, volunteers and target groups are equal in the sense that the learning process is shared and it concerns lifelong learning.

Culture for everybody

It is often said that the majority of consumers of culture are wellbeing pensioners, especially elderly women. The problem is, however, that culture and arts don't reach everybody, for instance people living in different kinds of aided living facilities. There are different ways of making culture available to everybody. This kind of activity can be supported by the community or arranged by the third sector, some society or organization or as just an individual's spontaneous activity.

Human activity gets its highest expression in the various forms of culture and everyday culture surrounds us everywhere. Culture single us out as individuals but it also unites us so that culture can makes us feel that we belong to nations, ethnic groups, families. Everybody should be able to meet this need of culture to a satisfying extent.

Culture offers an unending source of topics to be used also in voluntary work. Regardless the age and the prevailing circumstances, there are always some ways of making possible for all to enjoy culture.

3. HOW DIFFERENT FIELDS OF CULTURE INFLUENCE PEOPLE'S WELLBEING?

Music and Dance

"If music be the food of love, then play on..." (W. Shakespeare 1564 - 1616)

In our modern world music often surrounds us – even if we like it or not – music is some kind of background in many of man-made environments. There is no denying that music influences us, many scientific studies show that.



Music affects people's nervous system, pulse and muscular tension. For instance, when we listen to quieting music, our muscles relax, heartbeat and blood pressure become lower, we excrete less stress hormone, and we feel less pain. Quickening rhythm may be experienced as something threatening; on the other hand, slow rhythm relaxes and calms down.

Music influences people's emotions. Music played in major keys creates a feeling of courage and strength while minor keys sound "sad" and may relieve sorrow and anxiety. Music may also bring to mind forgotten memories. The recognition of the effects of music on people of different ages has made music an aid in education and in therapeutic situations.

Singing and especially choir singing has been found to have a positive effect on both people's emotional life and immunity, proving that musical activity affects wellbeing and health. Singing in a choir increases social relationships and the feeling of belonging.

Assignments:

- Listening to some piece of music (it can be anything from rock music or a children's song to musicals or classical music) and telling about the atmosphere and feelings that it creates.
- Recognizing a well-known song by listening to an extract.
- Cinema music: Recognizing music from a film. What else do you remember about the film?



Through history people have expressed themselves by dancing in life's various situations: people have danced when they have been glad, when they have been grateful, when preparing for war, as a religious ritual or a healing therapy.

Dancing is a versatile and rewarding way of expression as it combines both physical movement and the benefits of music to health and wellbeing. The social aspect of dancing is also very important; dancing belongs to many social events.

Assignments:

- Make simple dance figures for a) people who walk; b) people sitting in wheelchairs.
- Every participant makes choreography for him/herself to a well-known melody. Especially children find it easy to dance freely according to music.

Visual Arts

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever". (John Keats 1795-1821)

Presenting things in pictures began remarkably earlier than written messages. Early art such as cave drawings were connected with humans' vital activities and survival. It was information to other humans and it could

be produced by anyone. Unlike written output or music or forms of performance art, early artefacts have been preserved up till our days, the oldest cave paintings are estimated to be over 20 000 years old. In the course of time a most versatile spectrum grew from the humble beginning.

According to a definition accepted today visual arts consist of ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, photography, video, filmmaking, literature and architecture. In this presentation literature and architecture have been dealt with separately.

It is difficult to explain in more detail the terminology used of different kinds of art from different periods, different regions. It suffices to say that the history of arts follows the changes of human history and different styles of certain periods have been named accordingly, we speak for instance of Renaissance or Baroque art.



Today artists, painters, sculptors or graphic artists have gotten specific training. But it is possible for practically anyone to enjoy or pursue art and produce "things of beauty" as a hobby in various evening classes or courses arranged by education centres etc. Volunteering is often needed to make this kind of activity accessible to everyone.

Assignments:

- Design and carry out an environmental work of art in a special place. The material can be recycled or gathered from nature.
- Use worn-out books as material for a work of art. Use your imagination by cutting, folding, painting, decorating the books in different ways.
- Bring some everyday tools used in the kitchen, some dishes, vases etc. Discuss how beautiful, useful, functional they are. What memories do they arouse?

Architecture

Architecture offers good possibilities in volunteer work to implement active citizenship. Architecture is not a phenomenon, unrelated to its environment, which only has to do with buildings. It includes the environment with streets and roads, bridges and parks etc. There is architecture in all man-built environment, e.g. remnants of past civilization and the entirety of various cultural landscapes. Thus an architect when drawing a building must

consider many aspects: is the structure of the building sensible, does it work well, is it suitable for the users, is it beautiful and pleasant, does it offer an aesthetic experience to those who see it, and, in addition, does it suit its environment?



Active citizens can learn to recognize the appropriate and the less fortunate developments of the residential and public buildings and give feedback to the authorities. In voluntary work volunteers can help the target group to find their own favourite places in the vicinity. They can also help e.g. immigrants or elderly people to recognize various messages in the environment which are transmitted through senses, these messages being e.g. traffic lights, guiding boards, road signs and advertisements, building material, the look and site of buildings. Good architecture supports and aids moving from one place to another and orientation in the environment.

Assignments:

- A walk in small groups to a museum or an old suburb to see what can be found there. What is its architecture like? Is it beautiful and does it function? Is there something that could be better? Is the place accessible to everybody?
- Recall your first home or your school. Tell the others where it was situated, how you remember it, its advantages and disadvantages.
- Make an excursion to some public place in your own town and find out what problems and hindrances you may encounter if you sit in a wheelchair, push a pram or you are blind.
- Plan your ideal school/ home/ room (draw and tell the group about your work). You can also use materials such as empty milk cartons or cardboard boxes, paint and cloth to make houses/ furniture etc. You may also draw a map of a playground/a marketplace/a small town. Children can make a doll-house as team work.
- Find three buildings in your own town in which you can arrange a wedding celebration, an art exhibition or a concert and which are accessible to everyone.

Literature

"He ate and drank the precious word, his spirit grew robust. He knew no more that he was poor, nor that his frame was dust. He danced along the dingy days, and this bequest of wings was but a book: What liberty a loosened spirit brings!" (Emily Dickinson 1830 - 1886)

Reading literature does not perhaps always bring about as ecstatic lines as Emily Dickinson's poem, but literature has been and still is a source of inspiration to millions of people ever since the beginning of literacy. (Without going into the history of literature in more detail, the beginning of literature is estimated to have taken place in several places in the world: in Sumer, Egypt, China some 2000 years B.C.)

What is literature? The term most commonly refers to works of creative imagination including poetry, drama, fiction, nonfiction, journalism and often songs. In the present digital time reading has got new forms and reading literature traditionally in the form of a book seems to be decreasing, yet there is more printed text around than ever before.



Why do people read literature? Some people want excitement and action, others prefer romance and love; many people just want to relax, escape from the routines of everyday life and stress by identifying with the characters in books and following their fates.

There are surveys made in several countries, according to which reading literature relieves stress and improves empathetic feelings, skills to understand other people and their feelings. Verbal development and expanding one's vocabulary also calls for reading because the vocabulary of the spoken language is small compared with that of written text. When we read foreign texts our knowledge of other languages improves. This helps us to create and establish new social relationships, which in its turn improves our mental wellbeing. Literature teaches things which we don't find in schoolbooks or research reports. Reading literature is useful to people of all ages: books challenge us to think in a new way, provoke our conception of ourselves and broaden our view of the world. Reading also hinders old people's memory loss.

Reading aloud gives versatile recreation as it involves several senses: speaking in addition to seeing and hearing. Also the listener's concentration improves when listening. Reading aloud to children is a tested means that develops their intellect in many ways.

In voluntary work reading aloud to e.g. old people, people with poor sight or immigrants can be very useful. Discussing the book in a group adds to the pleasant atmosphere and the experience of togetherness.

Libraries offer excellent service to get acquainted with literature and not only in print but also as audio-books or e-books. In addition to many-sided

literature, numerous newspapers and magazines in libraries offer up-to-date reading to everybody.

Assignments:

- Discussion about favourite books in a group. What kind of literature appeals to each member of the group?
- Reading an extract of e.g. a detective story or any other kind of literature. Discussion about what kind of literature it is.
- Telling about a picture. For instance, choose a well-known writer's portrait or just a cartoon character like Donald Duck.
- Teamwork: Role play about the history of your own town. Study (briefly) the history of your own town.
- Take a group of old people to the local library. Ask the librarian to tell them about some new books or a writer who is in "fashion" or whose anniversary is this year. In case of old people who find it difficult to go to the library, ask somebody from the library to come and present some new books etc.

Our Cultural Heritage (local, national, international)

Every nation has its own material and immaterial cultural heritage and traditions, which individuals and communities transmit to the next generation.

Cherishing and maintaining these is important whether the question is about preserving handicraft typical of a region, traditional food, ceremonies, buildings, scenery, manners or interests.



Preserving cultural heritage and traditions strengthens national identity and gives people the feeling of knowing one's own roots and belonging to a continuum of a community and a group, which is beneficial to wellbeing and health.

Assignments:

- Teamwork: Collecting ideas and memories of traditions having to do with Christmas celebration. What features are typical and important for your own town or area?
- The cultural heritage places of your own town or area. What buildings or culture scenery do you know in your own hometown?
- Memories of school food. How have food traditions changed?

4. PRACTICAL EXERCISE “ART EXHIBITION”

Size of group: 10 – 15 persons

Material needed: 5-10 big prints of landscape paintings, preferably by well-known painters, pictures depicting typical scenery in various parts of the country (your own or any country). The idea is that paintings chosen by the facilitator are in this case more suitable than those at a usual art exhibition, but it is also, of course, useful to take a group to an art exhibition at a gallery. In that case you need more time and have to think of the transport and other arrangements.

1. The facilitator hangs the pictures so that they can be seen by the group all the time and write the titles and painters of the pictures beneath the pictures.
2. The facilitator gives a short explanation of each picture. (The painter, the title of the picture).
3. Discuss the pictures with the group. Ask what they see in the picture. Start with simple questions about the colours, the type of landscape, the season, in what part of the country they think this kind of scenery could be found, when were the pictures painted, how can they see that, what is the atmosphere in the picture, why? Go on with more personal questions: which picture they like best, why.

This can be an oral exercise or, depending on the group, the facilitator may write down a few questions for the group to answer or even make them write short essays on the pictures / their favourite picture.

It's also important that the facilitator asks for the group feedback: how did the group like this type of exercise.

This exercise can easily be adapted to almost any country, where the facilitator can modify it according to the group. With small modifications, this exercise can be done with children (learning a foreign language) or with seniors. You may also choose e.g. portraits of important persons and at the same time tell the group something about history. Why not try to do this exercise with examples of world art?

5. PRACTICAL EXERCISE “GOOD ARCHITECTURAL ENVIRONMENT”

Size of group: 5-8 persons

The facilitator chooses 1-3 public buildings or other frequented places in the town. Take the group of participants for a walk there. Work in pairs or groups of three with assistants.

Before the visit, the facilitator should find out facts about the building: when it was built, for what purpose, the architect, what repairs/restorations have been made etc. Also make a short questionnaire or write a list of things to which the participants should pay attention to in the building. Ask the participants to estimate how functional the building is (e.g. on the scale 1-5) on the following points:

- How beautiful the building is (outside, inside)
- Accessibility (stairs, escalators, lifts etc.)
- Facilities (wash rooms, cafes, bars)
- How well does the building serve its purposes?

Complete the questionnaire with open questions. The assistants can help write down the answers, not only the weaknesses but also the best points of the building.

The facilitator might collect valuable information and may send participants' opinions to the town authorities thanking them and /or giving them some hints for improvements, and can also send a letter to the readers' column in a local paper.

This exercise can easily be adapted for various groups, children, immigrants, and disabled people.

6. CASE STUDY “KETTUMÄKI SERVICE CENTRE”

The Act on Care for the Elderly in Finland stipulates that care facilities have to organize cultural activities and physical exercise to increase the wellbeing and vitality of the elderly. Since it is not defined what these activities should be, different facilities implement the law in various ways. This study tells us what cultural services are provided for the residents and other interested elderly people by Kettumäki Service Centre. The service centre is maintained by the association Kuusankosken Seudun Vanhainhuoltoyhdistys r.y., founded in 1969.

Kettumäki Service Centre has been providing a variety of residential and recreational services and activities since 1992. The mission of the service centre is to offer home-like residential services with supporting services and provide private-sector social and health care services for the elderly in Kouvola. The aim of the daily activities is to improve elderly people’s physical, mental and social wellbeing. This can be achieved by acknowledging the individuality and self-determination of the residents as well as maintaining co-operation with the relatives and other co-operating partners.

Recreational activities.

Kettumäki Service Centre organizes, under the concept “recreational activities”, various social, cultural and physical services and events for the elderly. All these being an early stage support services they are available not only for the residents, but also for all interested elderly people and those needing special services because of handicaps or disabilities.

In September 2016, the age of the participants in activities varied from 60 to 100 years, which means that the participants represented several different generations and this broadened the views of the participants. Recreational activities were aimed at activating, supporting and maintaining elderly people’s mental, physical and social capacities, preventing depression, feeling of loneliness and isolation and enhancing their wellbeing.

Supply and implementation of recreational activities

The recreational activities and events in Kettumäki Service Centre are run, planned, chosen, and implemented by the service instructor. However, when choosing the programmes and topics, wishes and proposals from residents, their relatives, and other participants within the possibilities and resources available are considered.

There are also activities which are mainly aimed at the residents, and they are run by the instructor of Kettumäen päiväkeskus / Kettumäki Day Centre, occasionally in co-operation with the above-mentioned service instructor or with various municipal wellness facilities in Kouvola.

Forms of recreational activities

Recreational activities are distinctly divided into three categories: physical exercise, social, cultural and educational activities. The last mentioned includes a variety of informative lectures e.g. on health, medication, social benefits, use of information technology in everyday situations etc.

This presentation concentrates on the cultural services provided. These include music, singing, dance, literature and visual arts. Producers of these cultural experiences are mainly (90%) various interest groups, schools, organizations, associations or individual persons. 90% of cultural recreation is free of charge, in the hands of volunteers.

Music and Dance

Music is performed by various choirs and bands. Some of the bands play dance music, and there's dancing in the dining room. Music programmes often have a theme, e.g. a certain decade or period of time. Also volunteer dancers come to perform in the centre. Local choirs and groups of children from Kuusankoski schools and music school come to sing to / with the elderly. Sometimes there is karaoke singing or singsong. In addition, volunteers from associations organize musical quizzes.

Visual arts

An art club meets on Mondays. The club works in different ways: they draw, paint, and make ceramics or sculpture. In addition they make small handicrafts from different materials. Persons who don't think they are artistically talented are also invited to participate.

Visual experiences are also offered in the form of changing exhibitions of children's drawings, and photo displays. An example of one individual's voluntary work is a local amateur photographer, who presents local paper mill milieu and the River Kymi scenery in her photos as well pictures of animals and plants. Her photos bring aesthetic enjoyment, pleasure and memories from the past to the spectators' minds. The photos even provoke lively debate and reminiscence in a group.

Literature

Sometimes local writers come to present their books and discuss them and answer listeners' questions. The books are mostly memoirs and interesting to the audience because of the local themes. Another form of literature, which is traditionally a well-liked subject in Finland, is poetry. Groups of volunteers, e.g. from the local Adult Education Centre, regularly come to recite and discuss poetry.

Participation

Participation in cultural activities and events varies greatly. At some events there may be just 6 participants while another appeals to 60 participants. The service centre staff keeps reminding seniors of the events, activating

and motivating the residents to participate in the events by explaining to them what kind of impact participation has on their mood and thus on their health.

Impacts on the participants

There has not been any official research on the effects of cultural services in the service centre. However, the staff has made observations of their own over the years. Cultural activities have been found to alleviate loneliness, prevent isolation and increase the sense of togetherness. It has been found that the elderly have become more active and their physical condition and mood have also improved considerably.

Summary

Kettumäki Service Centre organizes diverse cultural activities and events for interested participants. Without this, it would be very difficult for most of the residents to enjoy culture in any other form than watching television, which would make them even more passive and isolated. As the cultural activities provided by the service centre are accessible also for non-residents it brings variation and a wider social network also for the residents. Volunteers in various societies, clubs, schools and other interest groups are of crucial importance in providing the programmes.

7. CASE STUDY “EUROPEAN APPROACH”

“European Approach: Exploring, Experiencing, Exchanging” was a project, during which it was possible to get acquainted with the culture of partner countries in study groups, on visits to partners, excursions and net discussions as well as make use of material found e.g. on the internet. The idea of the project can be used in recreational activities arranged by volunteers for various target groups.



Partners:

Kuusankosken Retkeilijät from Finland;

Palamuse Rahvamaja from Estonia;

Meram Halki Egitim Merkezi Ve Aso Müdürlüğü from Turkey;

Bem Me Quero from Portugal;

Stowarzyszenie Wolontariatu Miedzypokoleniowego from Poland;

Luetec; Libera Universita Europea della Terza Eta Campania from Italy;

Kinisi Ethelonton Service Civil International Hellas from Greece.

The common rationale of the project was increasing the feeling of European togetherness by offering adult learners opportunities to study facts about EU and explore European countries and get experiences of international living. Increased mobility, studies of English and IT skills and new networks with the project partners helped to achieve these goals. The concrete objective of the project was to give adult learners, especially elderly people and people with special needs, positive learning experiences and to motivate them to Lifelong Learning and to promote their mobility.

The project had a good combination of seven partners. Participants got a lot of new transnational learning experiences during the project. European cooperation helped them to share knowledge and understand other cultures better and learners could feel that they are members of the European community. The project was also a way to combat prejudice, racism and xenophobia.

A common study program was planned together with the partner organizations. The program consisted of facts about the European Union and facts (e.g. history, geography, climate, nature, population, culture and economy) about partnership countries.

Each partner organized study groups (study circles) of adult learners. The groups studied in pairs, after studies of about three months the groups changed partners. When working in pairs the intention was to offer a possibility to interchange and deepen discussion between the groups during the study period as well as at the partnership meetings.

Material found on the internet, music, recordings, films and also literary sources, was used as material for the studies. As for current issues e. g. newspapers and magazines were used as a source of information. The scope of the studies was 15-24 lessons during one period of working in pairs and the total length 90-120 lessons covering seven study periods.

In connection with the partnership meetings, the matters learned in the study groups were presented in the form of portfolios. The participants got acquainted with the hosting country through study visits and cultural programmes. Each partner's own country was presented according to the theme of the meeting. During the partnership meetings, European fair or other performances for the local public were arranged. The themes for the partnership meetings were:

Lisbon, Portugal; History of Portugal, and especially the Age of Discovery
Athens, Greece; Arts
Białystok, Poland; Gastronomy
Palamuse, Estonia; Dance and Music
Konya, Turkey: Handicrafts
Naples, Italy; Europe and us
Kouvola, Finland; Nature Environment

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