

# Artistic Licence

## Using performing arts for building key competences



### 1. Introduction

#### **Funding Declaration:**

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission through the KA2 Adult Learning element of Erasmus+.

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#### **Executive Summary:**

The Artistic Licence project uses a unique blend of performing arts disciplines to develop bespoke training resources that support key competence acquisition among the growing marginalised adult and migrant communities in Europe.

To achieve this, the project partners have considered the in-service training needs of educators and produced resources to enable them to harness the full potential of these alternative methodological approaches.

#### **Project Partners:**

- Creative Exchange UK Ltd – (UK)
- Future In Perspective – (Ireland)
- Aliance Lektoru a Konzultantu – (Czech Republic)
- Hub Nicosia – (Cyprus)
- Osrodek Szkoleniowo - Badawczy Inneo – (Poland)
- Hub Karelia Oy – (Finland)
- RightChallenge – (Portugal)

#### **Links to Project Results and Resources:**

[Artistic Licence Project Website and Resources](#)

[Artistic Licence Facebook Page](#)

[E+ Project Results Platform](#)

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## 2. Issues – rationale for the project, what did it aim to address and why?

The Artistic Licence project aimed to use a unique blend of different performing arts disciplines to develop bespoke training resources that support key competence acquisition among the growing marginalised adult and migrant communities in Europe. To achieve this, partners also considered the in-service training needs of educators to enable them to harness the full potential of these alternative methodological approaches.

The objectives of the Artistic Licence project were to:

- support marginalised adults and newly arrived migrants to build basic skills as a first step towards lifelong learning, personal fulfilment and integration.
- support adult educators and migrant support workers to harness the potential of a suite of alternative educational resources to build high-value skill sets within their marginalised target groups.
- develop adult educators' and migrant support workers' pedagogic skills for working with non-traditional embedded-learning approaches using different artistic disciplines.
- ensure that adult educators, migrant support workers and any other potential intermediaries are professionally trained to use different artistic disciplines for basic skills acquisition.
- develop a thought-provoking policy paper that will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used and the relevance of the tools and resources developed in each local context.

***“You don’t need a lot of vocabulary to tell stories. Stories about love and life are understood by people of all cultures because they narrate about people and human nature. These stories show that people are equal.”***

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## 3. Impact of the Artistic Licence Project

***“You can talk with about music with everyone. It may be a man or a woman from the other side of the globe, but they certainly have their favourite music. And you’ll probably find some music clips you know. Music connects people.”***

The blend of arts and learning has a rich legacy, yet in the field of working with migrant communities to learn a new language, there seemed to few resources available. A partner organisation in the UK specifically mentioned the lack of accessible training resources aimed at their volunteer teachers and trainers. In Cyprus trainers recognised the need of new tools and resources to develop interactive lesson plans aimed at marginalised adults. Artistic Licence has, in a small way, begun to address these needs.

Our Portuguese Partner RightChallenge is very clear about the impact of the project both on the organisation and those they work with. Artistic Licence has enabled them to *“provide innovative training to adult educators”* and this in turn has helped trainers and participants value *“learning to live with cultural differences, recognise values and understand the importance of interaction between cultures”*. In other words, it transforms a traditionally one way delivery methodology into a two way, mutually beneficial learning process. This, in turn, has *“strengthened the capacity-building of our staff through the development of integration projects utilising the performing arts”* - the Artistic Licence training resources empower both the trainer and the participant.

This is mirrored across the partnership. In the Czech Republic, AKLUB noted how as an organisation they *“appreciate the fact that our organisation has acquired 18 new educational tools, tools which are very effective in teaching the basic skills needed to integrate marginalised adults into society. We have gained new know-how and experience and our trainers are better equipped to work with people who have different cultural roots and come from a different language environment.”*

Participants in the Artistic Licence project have developed skills and competencies that are really important for the future. Front-line adult and community educators have enhanced their skills through the lens of the performing arts. This was further enhanced when marginalised adults participated in the training and events where they came in direct contact with trainers and practitioners. Our Cypriot Partners reported that *“through a brief seminar and personal interaction, it seems that the project is able to increase their confidence to participate to the civic life of their host community”*. A significant endorsement for a project aiming to develop new training resources and testament to the impact of the approach.

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In Ireland participation in the Artistic Licence project helped the partner organisation develop its competences to work with adults' groups and facilitate specific targeted training to adult educators. It was clear from the feedback that those participating in the training had little opportunity to 'recharge' or learn themselves such is the intensity of demand; *"It was refreshing to take that hour out of my day and spend it on my learning, I felt calm, energised and creative after the session which then lead me into a productive day"*. The project has provided much needed resources to a passionate but overworked group of professionals.

In the UK it was clear from those attending the online training and dissemination events that the need for materials extended far beyond the traditional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Representatives from Local Government, sports organisations and specialist disability groups attended alongside more expected community and training organisations. This reflected the reality that resources are needed across the training and engagement landscape to help with language learning, and in integration through the need to communicate.

In Poland the potential for social and professional inclusion of marginalised adults through art and creative activities has rarely been used at National level, so the project has provided a much needed response to this problem. Many of the participants stressed that they very much liked the In-Service Training Programme developed in this project.

Our technology experts in Finland were able to use the project to address the technical development side. They gained valuable insight into the importance of accessibility in terms of user interface design when delivering online contents for the project target groups particularly when it was found that they were working mainly on mobile interfaces. This also meant revisiting the website design to cater for the different needs of both learners and educators.

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## 4. The role of educators, parental and community involvement

Artistic Licence Partners had two distinct test audiences through the stakeholder groups and the In Service Training Event; these were aimed at Parents and Educators.

The educators training event provided an opportunity for the fledgling Intellectual Outputs to be tested. Their comments and suggestions helped shape the resources and began to highlight their wider value.

***“I saw adult learners from a different perspective”***

***“I learnt about aspects needed when teaching migrants and marginalised adults”***

This empathetic approach proved crucial in taking the resources forward particularly because of the focus on using arts based sessions which, if not handled well, could have caused additional issues. Some trainers talked about the specific problems of working with individuals who had experienced trauma but were enthusiastic that approaches through music, drama or storytelling provided alternative approaches to help.

Participants found the Artistic Licence exercises helpful particularly through using different methods in facing their language learning.

***“It was fun to learn.”***

***“Drama part was fun.”***

Feedback from end and potential users has been a vital component in shaping the final versions of the Artistic Licence training material and Resources. However, this often meant starting from a negative viewpoint where traditional education methods, based on verbal communication, had had the effect of pushing people with limited vocabulary away from the systems set up to help them. As by not understanding the teaching individuals were ashamed of their language inadequacy.

***“As a drama facilitator I like to use music as a starting point.”***

Parental and community involvement has helped to diversify the activities and the resources based on their own artistic experiences. It helped in cementing the interconnectivity between the different disciplines enabling partners to think more creatively when developing the training handbooks and being clear that the session plans developed could and should be adapted.



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***“I loved the first workshop. Listening to the music really helped me get straight down to making marks on the page and I found it easy to switch between each piece.”***

The relationships between parents and communities linked to the partner organisations created interest in the new techniques for education and it quickly became clear that the materials could be used in a variety of situations and with impact beyond the initial scope of the project.

***“Absolutely enjoyed every minute of every workshop. Very helpful and thought provoking.***

Partners reported that working cross culturally with the materials strengthened social cohesion in areas of diversity, “by rebuilding relationships that have historically been marked by mistrust”. Equally it was noted that “utilising performing arts in education can provide students with the opportunity to engage the mind, the body and emotions into a collaborative learning process that ultimately enables them to discover their own voice, grow in confidence and develop empathy towards each other”.

***“This project breaks the traditional curriculum models used in the integration of migrants and refugees. Artistic Licence also allowed discovery of new methodological procedures that enhance the possibilities of innovation of community intervention activities and programmes”***

Other partners reported on how developing and using the resources has “helped to reduce gender inequality by enabling the empowerment of women from ethnic minorities in the region through their participation in the project implementation”. Equally important was the generous feedback from the end users, often those who had found it difficult to learn the host language and integrate in the host society. It was heartening to hear and read their responses to the training sessions.

***“The most interesting thing about this project is the possibility of sharing our cultural identity with the community that welcomes us. Being able to share a part of my culture while learning the local cultural diversity through music was quite rewarding. Through music, I was able to break down cultural barriers that were not visible.”***

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## 5. The role/experience of the project partners

**Cyprus** - The main impact of the Artistic Licence project on our organization was the creation of a new kind of understanding in relation to teaching and pedagogy. The effort of our team to gain greater insights around the ways that performing arts, such as drama, music, and storytelling, can pedagogically intervene to broaden the skills of marginalised individuals, actually helped us to enhance our team spirit and sense of belonging.

**Finland** – We encouraged parents to have their children within the group sessions. The children could take part of the exercises or they could just hang around. When we had the mentoring for the community social workers they found some of the exercises helpful to understand the situations of misunderstanding when working with migrants; It's not always easy to put yourself in someone's shoes.

**Portugal:** - The project has promoted the perception of our organisation as an institution that promotes social change aiming at the acceptance of social and cultural differences through artistic methodologies. This can happen specifically because of the tools and resources developed through the project that foster social inclusion and learning through performing arts.

**UK** – The Artistic Licence materials have opened the door for our organisation to be recognised by national organisations such as the Refugee Council and Migrants Abroad who both commented that they would definitely use the materials to train their trainers. This provides additional kudos when we approach local training organisations who often look for recommendations before accepting the validity of the resources.

**Czech Republic** – Our local research control group comprising of key local stakeholders helped us with project outputs development, evaluated project progress and advised us which way to go, what things to emphasise and how to make them more appropriate. These alternative educational resources are considered very innovative in a country where formal educational practices are still the norm.

**Ireland** – Our organisation has benefitted from Parental and Community involvement in the development of the Artistic Licence resources. They have helped to diversify the activities and the resources based on their own artistic experiences and expectations which also means they have a stake in the end results.

**Poland** - The project enabled the INNEO staff involved to gain new experience, to meet new partners and to develop interesting materials together. The employees also acquired new skills, such as learning about the Powtoon video resource, which is now used in everyday activities.

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### 6. The potential for further development of Artistic Licence

Partners and participants were asked 'what could be done differently' and 'what could be improved'. The responses show that while Artistic Licence has begun to address a European wide issue in the provision of language training, particularly in resourcing the trainers and training organisations, there is still a need for quality resources

**Cyprus:** If we were able to expand and further develop the Artistic License concept, we would definitely introduce different learning tactics. This is based on the reality that every individual has different ways/models of learning. Therefore, the trainer should be ready to restructure and adapt some of the modules, for example by introducing other arts disciplines such as dance.

The training materials could also be expanded to explore issues of interculturalism and integration particularly in training the educators how sessions can benefit through mixing people from different social, religious, ethnic backgrounds and the potential impact on enhancing tolerance and understanding through shared learning.

**Finland:** Some of the exercises were more difficult than the others and were aimed at groups with better language skills. The trainers addressed this by adapting the material and simplifying it for example by letting people use pictures instead of trying to find the right words.

The resources have also been with different groups for example individuals with mental health issues. It was found that the exercises helped to reduce anxiety, and stress. To help participants describe their feelings trainers used the toys from a Kinder Surprise asking participants to choose a character that explains how they were feeling.

**Portugal:** We think that it would be interesting to connect the artistic and social dimensions together with a research element. Strong research linked to empirical results of the project's educational intervention would be useful to capture the attention of new stakeholders.

Opportunities could be found to train mediators to create a communicate link between local communities and migrants and refugees. This would link the training resources to the concept of intercultural mediation which has been explored in Portugal and could lead to cooperation for developing new projects.

**Czech Republic:** Adult education in the Czech Republic is still based mainly on formal teaching from the front. Knowledge is passed on instead of skills. There is still little "learning by practising", "learning by doing" or "learning through experience". We want to extend the use of the resources to using art disciplines in teaching promoting this concept among a wider group of trainers and educators.

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**Ireland:** We would like to expand and adapt the existing material to make it suitable for use with different groups and across the community to build cultural awareness.

We would anticipate:

- Building intercultural awareness between different groups
- Bridging cultural capital between different cultural groups
- Addressing cultural misunderstandings, prejudice and stereotypes

This could be done by using the existing material to develop self-awareness and mindfulness activities combining the three performing arts in a single activity. For example, using music from different countries and cultures to stimulate creativity or artistic activities, and have participants to share or explain the meaning of the song using it as a storytelling activity.

**UK** – Covid 19 has had a serious impact on community groups working with migrants. It has severely limited face to face activities with migrants themselves making the resources developed even more important. As the migrant crises continues many volunteer organisations are facing significantly reduced funding meaning that access to new, free material has been greatly appreciated. We intend to continue to reach out to our international network and UK councils, community organisations and charities, offering support and establishing permanent links.

**Poland** - In our opinion, the Artistic Licence project has potential for transfer to other sectors and other countries. We are interested in the possibility of transferring the approach to the youth sector and adapt it to meet the requirements of young participants and youth trainers.

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## 7. Recommendations

### 1. Online tools in an age of lockdown

Artistic Licence has developed resources that can be accessed and used online. Given that life has recently become more internet and online based there is scope for the resources to be further developed to be used remotely by individuals or through facilities such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

### 2. Intercultural Dialogue

It has become clear that the resources developed have had a much wider impact than just providing materials to help in learning language. Arts based learning allows the participants to share something of themselves. Partners have been clear that there has been significant intercultural benefits among the target audience and the hosts. There is significant scope for this indirect benefit of the training to be explicitly taken forward through a new project

### 3. Volunteer Training Opportunities

Artistic Licence has provided easy to use materials for a group that are often undervalued and under-resourced; volunteers. There are countless small groups in each partner country doing whatever they can to help in the ongoing migrant crisis. With a clear dissemination strategy backed by suitable budget the resources already developed could be rolled out on a regional or national basis.

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