

# Survey on community's training needs for life skills promoting creative resilience



“Introducing a collaborative scheme between artists & community members fostering life skills development and resilience through creative placemaking”

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| Abstract:            | The results from a survey exploring the existing levels of life skills in a sample of 141 young respondents in Greece, Italy and Portugal and how creative practices helped them to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic. |
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**1. Introduction to the research**

1.1 Objectives:

As part of the activities leading to the O1, a research based on primary data collected through a questionnaire was developed to investigate the community members involved in the project and understand their existing life skills, how they were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the role of creative practices for their development.

The goal of this part of research is to identify the training needs that young people from Greece, Italy and Portugal have in terms of key life skills and the role of arts and creativity in



their lives in order to design the curriculum that will connect them with the artists in the collaborative scheme around creative placemaking.

## 1.2 Methodology:

An [online survey](#) was designed by the partner in charge of this activity, Melting Pro Learning, with support from the coordinator, ActionAid Greece. The questionnaire is based on "[LifeComp: The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence Framework](#)" of the EC that contains a set of competences applying to all spheres of life that can help citizens to thrive in the 21st Century. These key life skills grouped in 3 main areas: Personal Area, Social Area, Learning to Learn Area.

Following this classification, the questionnaire was structured in 16 questions exploring:

- the perceived level of life skills in the Personal Area: Self-Regulation - Flexibility – Wellbeing (Question 1)
- the perceived level of life skills in the Social Area: Empathy - Communication - Collaboration (Question 2)
- the perceived level of life skills in the Learning to Learn Area: Growth mindset - Critical Thinking - Managing Learning (Question 3)
- the skills that life through the pandemic triggered and the ones that are perceived as necessary and still missing (Question 4 and 5)
- the practices and habits, creative and non-creative ones, that helped them the most through the pandemic (Question 6, 7 and 8)
- personal information about their: gender, age group, occupation, ethnicity, creative interest.

The survey was designed and managed using the SurveyMonkey software. It was created in English with the option of the Portuguese version, to ensure accessibility for the community members in Portugal who, according to the local partner, Clube, would find it difficult to answer the questions in English. AAH, IoDeposito, Clube were the partners in charge to promote the survey within the communities that will be directly involved in the collaborative scheme with the artists. In each country the target to be reached was approx. 50 respondents with a focus on adults aged 18-40, women and ethnic and cultural minorities. The questionnaire was sent out to the target of 150 respondents from Greece, Italy and Portugal in a timeframe of 21 days, from January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 17<sup>th</sup> 2022.



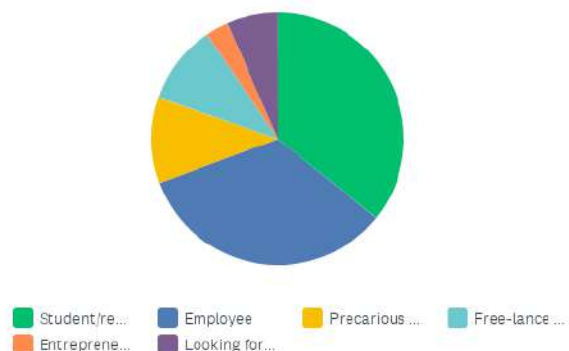
### 1.3 The sample: 141 respondents in Greece, Italy and Portugal

A total of 141 people took part in the survey, with a vast majority of youngsters between 18 and 30 years old (81,75%) and a higher component of female respondents (69%). The sample is mainly based in the 3 countries taking part in the Come2Art project, Greece, Italy and Portugal. A 10% of them declared not to be born in the country where they currently reside but in these countries: *Albania, Georgia, UK, Uzbekistan, Brazil, South Africa*. Over 10% of respondents has at least one parent born in a country other than the one where they currently reside: *Albania, Georgia, Russia, Algeria, Cameroon, Nigeria, UK, Uzbekistan, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Poland*.

Almost 20% of respondents answered “Yes” to this question: “Would you describe yourself as belonging to a specific ethnic or cultural group?”. The groups that people listed to describe their ethnic or cultural belonging are as follows: *Muslim, Refugee, Mediterranean (cultural), Roma communities, Soviet, Caucasian/German, Latino, Greek, European, Italian*.

In terms of occupation, the distribution that can be visualized in the graphic below shows that there are 4 main groups amongst respondents: students or researchers (35,77%); employees (33,58%); precarious workers and people looking for a job (17,52%); entrepreneurs and free-lance consultants (13,14%).

D15 Please describe your occupation, I am a...



Respondents' creative interests were explored through an open question at the end of the survey: “Which artistic or creative expression would you like to explore or improve in the near future?”. In the word cloud below, what can be observed after re-grouping answers by

merging the same artistic practices typed in different languages (English and Portuguese) or using different words, is that:

- drawing and painting is the most recurrent creative practice, with 30 occurrences in a total of 137 answers;
- performing arts including music, dance and theatre are mentioned 34 times;
- creative practices related to writing were chosen 10 times;
- photography had 5 occurrences.

It should be noted that the general answers “Art” and “artists” were listed in 13 answers, without further specification to any creative language or artistic practice.

desenho performance Drawing Música music Singing Painting  
Escrita art Teatro dance playing music Pintura artist Writing  
Photography



## 2. Main findings

### 2.1 Perceived level of life skills in the Personal Area

In the personal sphere, the key competences related to **wellbeing**, defined as the *capacity to pursue life satisfaction, care of physical, mental and social health; and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle* are the life skills where respondents most strongly agreed on special

efforts that needed to be taken. The 2 following statements received the highest percentage of strong agreement:

*I felt like I needed to take special care of my mental health (30,00%)*

*I am more aware of the importance of taking care of my family members mental health (29,29%)*

followed by a statement related to what made young people's mental and social health become more fragile, combined with the Covid-19 pandemic itself that affected the physical health:

*One of the hardest things has been to face uncertainty and constantly reviewing and changing plans (25,71%)*

**Flexibility**, the *ability to manage transitions and uncertainty, and to face challenges*, was explored in connection to the capacity of young people to set new goals for their personal and professional life despite the need for constant adaptations that was perceived as very hard by most of them (72,85% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement above). It is interesting that a high % of respondents, 77,86%, still felt fully able to determine their lives establishing new goals for their future.

Coming to the *awareness and management of emotions, thoughts and behaviour* that defines the life skills connected to **self-regulation**, answers are more diverse. If more than the half of respondents (53,19%) declared that they did not always feel in control of their emotions in the last two years, almost one third said that they did. A similar distribution of responses was collected about the statement:

*My hope and sense of purpose have not been weakened at all by the pandemic*

While 30,21% of the respondents agreed with this remark, 19,42% were neutral to it, and more than a half of the sample disagreed or strongly disagreed (50,36%). Even if people could find ways to manage the necessary transitions in personal life, social participation and work making conscious choices and setting goals, it seems that emotionally the struggle was bigger. The ability to nurture optimism, hope and a sense of purpose to support action was weakened by living through the Covid-19 pandemic, which is shown also by the high percentage (75,71%) of people fully agreeing with the statement



*I realized that my thoughts have turned dark at times*

If the level of uncertainty caused by the global health crisis didn't stop youngsters' plans for the future, it affected their stress responses and the capacity to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviors.

## 2.2 Perceived level of life skills in the Social Area

This survey focused on two key competences in the social sphere: **empathy**, defined as the *understanding of another person's emotions, experiences and values, and the provision of appropriate responses*; and **communication**, the *ability to use relevant communication strategies, domain-specific codes and tools, depending on the context and content*.

In terms of awareness, understanding and responsiveness of other people's emotions and experiences during the pandemic, the vast majority of respondents declare that they have often worried about whoever could be more at risk (77,3%). If the health emergency made youngsters more concerned about their friends and family, over a 40% of them described themselves as *more impatient with people that showed a different perspective on what we were experiencing*, while the 35% did not. When asked if they felt *able to fully understand another person's emotions and experiences*, half of them answered that they did not, while the 32,14% of respondents declared their ability to fully empathize with others.

Coming to the communication skills, the effects of the pandemic – still in progress – seem to have improved the way people interact and communicate with friends and family through digital devices, a statement that almost 70% of respondents have agreed with. When they engage in conversations with other people, the 67,85% of youngsters declare to feel joyful and confident but almost 15% of them say that they don't (20 respondents on a total of 141). And when confronted with new or different social contexts in which they have to manage interactions, the sample is split into 3 groups: the 32,86% state they have developed social insecurity and feel more nervous, 40% of them declare that they don't feel more socially insecure, 25% neither agree nor disagree, a data that can be explained through the fact that social activities have not gone back to pre-pandemic frequency and dynamics yet.





### 2.3 Perceived level of life skills in the Learning to Learn

The experiential learning dimension of living through a pandemic seems to be quite aware amongst respondents: more than a half of them stated that everything they have learnt made them more determined in pursuing their life goals. 62,14% of youngsters feel confident that they have learnt how to adapt and cope with difficulties when looking ahead. It is interesting to note that a similar percentage (62,15%) state that in the last 2 years they have changed plans and expectations about their personal and professional development. The **growth mindset** of young people seems to have been triggered by the pandemic making them more aware of what they have lost and gained and how they were able to cope with it. The sample is split in two in considering this 'forced' learning process in positive or negative terms: the 48,94% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement:

*Looking back I feel that my experiences through the pandemic have helped me improve and develop my potential*

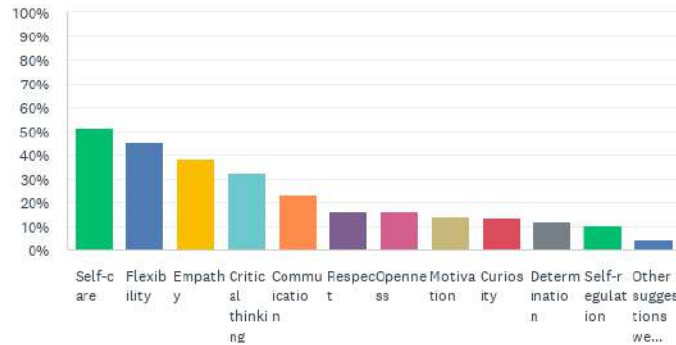
While the 24,83% disagreed and 26,24% neither agreed nor disagreed. Their **critical thinking** was also definitely challenged: more than a half of them (58,57%) described their difficulties to deal with the amount of data, information and messages spread by media. When asked about their perceived level of **problem solving** and how the last 2 years affected it, most of them agreed that it has improved (47,14%), 17,86% don't think that it has increased and 34,29% neither agreed nor disagreed.

### 2.4 The impact of living through a pandemic: life skills and creative practices

More in general, the survey shows that the skills and personal attitudes that living through the pandemic triggered the most in young people are **self-care** and **flexibility**, followed by **empathy** and **critical thinking**. When asked about the 3 main lessons learnt in the last 2 years, the majority of respondents chose the answers as per the graphic below:



D4 What are the main lessons learnt that came from living through the pandemic? Please choose up to 3.

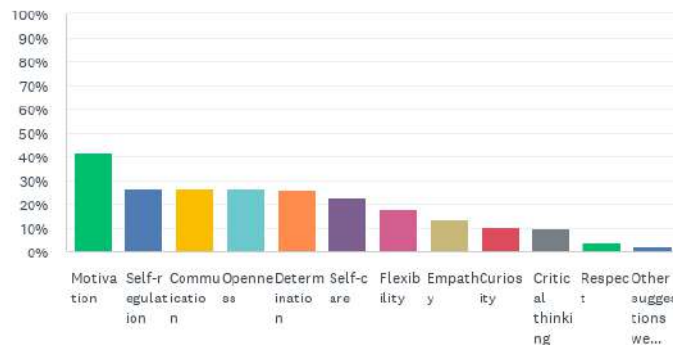


If matched with the data collected in response to the following question: *Which learning are you still struggling with?* – we see that the personal trait that was most affected by the disruption and changes caused by the health crisis is confirmed to be: **motivation**. More than 40% of respondents chose this as their main struggle, which is a component of the **self-regulation** skill, chosen by 26,95% of the sample (graphic below). Together with the score of the **determination** ability (26,24% marked it as something that they are struggling with), this can be read as the evidence that 2 years of pandemic have weakened youngsters’ ability to nurture optimism, hope and a sense of personal purpose that they can rely on when actively trying to pursue long-term goals.

The other sphere where respondents showed more difficulties is the Social Area, with **communication** and **openness** being the traits and behaviors chosen by more than a quarter of the sample as life struggles. It is possible that the cause is connected to the remaining level of restrictions for preventive measures still in place in many contexts but the data show a fragility developed by youngsters when opening and communicating with other people.



D5 Which learning are you still struggling with? Please choose up to 3.



Analysing the practices that young people have put in place to cope with the uncertainty, fragility and difficulties in the last 2 years, we see that **cultural and creative activities** are the most frequent, with 56,74% of respondents choosing them as the way they took care of their wellbeing and mental health, followed by non formal support from family and friends and sports. Amongst these, the graphic below shows the distribution of creative practices that respondents marked as their favourite:

| OPZIONI DI RISPOSTA  | RISPOSTE       |    |
|--|----------------|----|
| Listening to music   | 63,33%         | 76 |
| Watching movies  | 55,83%         | 67 |
| Reading  | 46,67%         | 56 |
| Watching TV shows  | 38,33%         | 46 |
| Listening to Podcasts                                      | 30,83%         | 37 |
| Drawing/painting   | 25,83%         | 31 |
| Writing  | 25,00%         | 30 |
| Watching theatre/dance                                     | 24,17%         | 29 |
| Art exhibition (online or in presence)                     | 22,50%         | 27 |
| Playing music  | 17,50%         | 21 |
| Other suggestions we might haven't considered? (open text) | Risposte 7,50% | 9  |
| Totale rispondenti: 120                                    |                |    |

When asked about how their favourite creative practice or cultural habit makes them feel when they are engaged in it, the top 4 adjectives mentioned are:

*More relaxed (58,87%)*



*Happy (46,81%)*

*Focused (41,84%)*

*Self-fulfilled (37,59%)*

It is worth noting some recurrences amongst the creative practices mentioned in the open comments that made respondents feel happy and connected to themselves or to the others. The outdoor dimension of activities such as being in nature, walking outside, running, visiting gardens is present in several comments, as well as that of hand crafting and making, such as carving wood, making jewels and restoring objects.

### 3. Some remarks and conclusions

The aim of this survey was to outline needs from different community members that can be addressed through the next stages of the project, particularly the collaborative scheme with artists in the same local contexts leading to a series of shared creative placemaking initiatives. To answer the question on how to boost creative resilience in young people still struggling with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, the results from the questionnaire offer some remarks on how to orientate the non-formal learning process that will come next:

1. The life skills that youngsters should be guided to develop creatively are related to their motivation and ability to self-regulate. Artists should engage them in actions where they feel they can give a genuine contribution in determining the outcome of the process, putting their talents at stake.
2. The collaborative and social dimension of the creative practices should be nurtured so that youngsters feel part of a larger group of people sharing the same values and purpose. This will allow them to reconnect with their openness and ability to communicate.
3. Practices where empathy and the sharing of one's experience through the pandemic is addressed have the potential to help youngsters to value what they have learnt in the last two years focusing on the positive aspects. It could lead to an important moment of collective awareness process and strength.



4. Creative skills and practices from the young members of the communities played an important role in the way they coped with the health crisis. They should be valued and catalyzed in the creative placemaking initiatives.
5. Tools to practice self-regulation and boost positivity determination in the way young people approach their plans for personal and professional development should be privileged in the curriculum to be designed. Lateral thinking and creative should be used as assets to make them feel that they still have full ownership over their lives.
6. Critical thinking and problem solving should be amongst the top learning achievements to take into account when defining the curriculum. Showing how creative solutions were implemented in response to social challenges can trigger a different perspective on how young people can give relevant contributions to an enhancement of their living conditions.

