



## COME2ART

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

# INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK

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## Introduction

COME2ART is an Erasmus+ project, funded by the European Commission. It is an initiative which came as a response to the negative economic and social impact that COVID-19 caused, focusing mainly on the cultural and creative sector which has been largely affected. In this critical moment, art and culture in general, shall be used as tools for the desired community wellbeing and cohesion.

COME2ART Partnership comprises 7 key players from 4 EU countries namely: ActionAid Hellas, with strong experience in community resilience building; the Faculty of Fine Arts of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; Culture Action Europe, a major European network of cultural organizations; MeP, an Italian VET provider in the field of arts; Clube an active organization in creative placemaking; IoDeposito, an active CSO working with local communities in enhancing cultural well-being; and CP, a grassroots creativity platform.

Aim of COME2ART project is to build creative resilience at community level across Europe, by establishing a collaborative scheme between artists / cultural workers currently in limbo and community members-namely young citizens-promoting life skills development through arts and using creative placemaking as a canvas for pilot testing the acquired skills through an inclusive approach, promoting active citizenship. By planning and implementing creative placemaking projects, the project will respond to artists' need for alternative ways of cultural production and consumption and will satisfy citizens' need for alternative ways of expression and social connection. During the implementation phase of the project, artists will find a leading social role in building community resilience through arts, and involved citizens will acquire life skills, such as self-regulation of emotions, flexibility, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, critical and creative thinking.

The current Intervention Framework initiates the project activities by defining the requirements and specifications for building community resilience of community members through arts and creative placemaking in partner countries. It suggests an action plan for the upcoming design and implementation of project's outcomes. The structure, as well as the content of the intervention process described in that document, are based on the primary



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and secondary research - on the role of art and creative placemaking in life skills development - that has already taken place during last months in partner countries.

### More specifically, the first chapter, concerning the

1. Theoretical background of the framework, is developed mainly on the basis of the findings of the *Desk Research* which was implemented by Aristotle University in cooperation with Culture Action Europe. In terms of secondary research, the involved partners targeted existing literature and strategies globally on the role of art in creative resilience and placemaking through life skills development, also adding the lens of COVID-19. In that sense it served as a first approach to the methodology that will be followed, taking into consideration the differentiations that the various places/sites/spaces and each local social, political and economic context indicate.

Following the Desk Research, the partners in Italy, Portugal and Greece conducted *Focus Groups* with representatives from the main target groups the project refers to, namely artists in limbo and representatives of community members. It is important to be mentioned here, that, a very important aspect of the project is the social inclusion and empowerment of citizens facing economical obstacles, discrimination based on their ethnic and cultural background, or gender inequalities. Saying that, the participants of all focus groups were selected according to the above mentioned social and economic criteria, giving an emphasis on the age range, as well, since the project promotes mainly the empowerment of young people aged between 18 to 35 years old.

The focus groups with the artists examined the challenges and opportunities arised for their sector due to COVID-19 while the ones with the community members emphasized on the challenges, needs, emotions of them living in the COVID-19 era, including need to feel creative and productive.

The findings of the focus groups provided important inputs for the development of the 2. Building Community Engagement Strategy which is described in the second chapter of the current document. Since placemaking projects take place mostly in public space, it is important that they involve in their activities, besides the main working groups of artists and community members, important community



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actors such as local authorities, policy makers, other CSOs of the city. Ensuring involved stakeholders' commitment and cooperation, is crucial for the successful fulfillment and long-term impact of creative placemaking projects.

Finally, an online *Survey*, aiming to identify existing level of life skills of community members, was carried out. The afore-mentioned skills were selected from the European framework of *Life Competencies* and *Digital Competencies* which citizens need to develop to successfully manage the challenges posed by the many transitions taking place in society. Soft skills such as, empathy, flexibility, personal wellbeing, self-regulation of emotions, collaboration, critical thinking, basic IT and media literacy are some examples of the skills investigated. The findings report, based on the data collected and analyzed by Melting Pro, served as input for the development of the 3. Life skills needs and training curriculum framework of project's participants. Acquiring the afore-mentioned life skills through designed training sessions, is an essential factor for the successful involvement of both artists and community members in the development of creative placemaking projects.

Although the proposed chapters of COME2ART Intervention Framework are specified as seemingly independent stages of the project, they are deeply interconnected and one depends on and affects the other. As it was stated in the Desk Research, a synthesis of *theory* and *practice* is fundamental for any creative *praxis*.<sup>1</sup> The process of constant reflecting on the ongoing process is highly recommended for any of the intervention stages. Learning by doing approach is highly recommended.

The current intervention framework can be used by stakeholders beyond the partnership as a tool for building community creative resilience through life skills development. It is particular useful for: a) local and regional authorities who wish to promote citizens' involvement in cultural planning, building a shared community identity in times of uncertainty; and b) CSOs working with vulnerable social groups and different sub-groups, such as youth, migrants, women, older

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<sup>1</sup> Kotsakis, Dimitris. 2012. *3 plus 1 essays*. Athens: Ekdoseis ton synadelfon. The *synthesis* of *theory* and *practice* makes the *praxis*, whatever the field of application is, be it artistic works, education, medicine, science, sports and so on. It is the rethinking/ reflecting on the practice which is applied to the evolution of theory, and vice versa, it is the theories that apply to the practice on a perpetual feed-back.





people, low-skilled, as an arts-based social inclusion method. In that way, the desired long-term impact of such projects can be ensured.

COME2ART project builds upon various previous EU funded projects, demonstrating the impact that arts and culture have on enhancing civic competences, creative expression, social cohesion and inclusion in community, active citizenship and well-being of adults. The results of two relevant previous projects funded by Erasmus+: the “Make Your Place” and the “Arts: Agents of Community Change” project (KA2 CB for youth), were taken into consideration regarding the design and implementation process of COME2ART. The first one was focusing on promoting civic engagement of young people through creative placemaking, while the second one was a youth mobility project which implemented a youth seminar on arts-based place-making approach. Other EU projects that offered valuable inputs was the “POPULART” which used art as a vehicle offered unique pathways to adult education for active citizenship, personal development and fulfillment, as well as “HEROINES” project which focused on the empowerment of women with mental illness living in rural areas through writing therapy.



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## 1. Theoretical background

*Placemaking* is a basic term, as well as an essential notion upon which COME2ART develops. Furthermore, it is one of the Program's basic goals, crucial for the life skills development and community resilience with which they are complementary. *Placemaking* includes *place* which is related to *space*; *space becomes* a place through processes of *experiencing*, while *art in public space* is one of the possible suchlike practices. The benefits of experiencing space through art in public space, have been extensively described in the Desk Research and will be outlined here together with their theoretical approaches.

### 1.1 Placemaking

The term *placemaking* became relatively common only in the recent decades and *creative placemaking* became widely spread only in the past ten years. Later on, according to Jeroen Laven, Anna Bradley and Levente Polyak it was the "*Project for Public Spaces*", a non-profit organization based in New York who begun consistently using the term since the mid-1990s, to describe their approach towards *building community around place*.<sup>2</sup> According to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), it was them who reinvented and made the term: 'In 2009, the NEA decided to focus on the role of arts organizations, artists, and designers in making better places and decided to call it 'creative placemaking'. It's a term that basically means giving the arts a seat at the community development table. In other words, when you are focusing on a new real estate development, transit opportunities, safety issues, public health crises, or other issues that impact how a place affects a resident's life, the arts should be one of the tools you consider using'<sup>3</sup>. Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa state that 'what in Europe is usually referred to as 'revitalization' of urban spaces, in the

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<sup>2</sup> Laven, Jeroen, Anna Louise Bradley, and Levente Polyak. 2019. "Placemaking in the European context. The movement is here to stay". *The Journal of Public Space*. 4 (Vol. 4 N. 1 | 2019 | FULL ISSUE): 135-154

<sup>3</sup> Schupbach, Jason, and Don Ball. 2016. *How to do creative placemaking: an action-oriented guide to arts in community development*.



U.S. has been denoted as ‘creative placemaking’<sup>4</sup> and Wilfried Eckstein adds that it is what nowadays tends to be reframed as ‘arts in urban resilience’, nevertheless *placemaking* remains the most common of all terms. As for the role of arts, Eckstein also comments that *creative placemaking* denotes artistic efforts to revitalize urban areas.

What has to be understood when it comes to *placemaking*, is that any person’s or any group’s, and any type or any scale activity is *making place* –it is *placemaking*, especially when talking on neighborhood and community levels. COME2ART project makes it clear that the desired processes would lead to achieve the synergies and the bridging between various persons, groups and factors, and it is not a high authority’s plan; smaller in size, neighborhood and community level interventions that resemble to bottom-up processes, rather than a masterplan proposal that excludes the people who will finally be the ones to experience the outcomes firsthand.

In a similar fashion comes Nabeel Hamdi in the prologue of his book *Pacemaker’s guide to building Community*, who explains that he has ‘preferred to use place maker in his title (rather than architects, planners, or experts) because it is inclusive of all who make and sustain the quality of human settlements, including principally the people and communities who are the inhabitants. The intelligence of place, I continue to maintain, is in the streets of places everywhere, not in the planning offices of bureaucracy’.<sup>5</sup> Landscape architect Lynda H. Schneekloth and architect and planner Robert G. Shibley state that ‘placemaking is the way in which all human beings transform the places they find themselves into the places where they live’.<sup>6</sup> With these words they emphasize on the importance and the necessity of active citizen participation in the making of their environment, even though in their book they actually examine the ‘true democratic collaborations of empowered communities with planning and architecture professionals’.

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<sup>4</sup> Schupbach, Jason, and Don Ball. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Hamdi, Nabeel, and Elizabeth L. Malone. 2010. *The Placemaker's Guide to Building Community*. London: Earthscan

<sup>6</sup> Schneekloth, Lynda H., and Robert G. Shibley. *placemaking: the art and practice of building Communities*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995



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In the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning research *Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities* the authors come back to the first sentences of this text's chapter when quoting: 'Placemaking is an act of doing something. It's not planning, it's doing. That's what's so powerful about it.'<sup>7</sup> In such a context, 'transforming the place you find yourself to the place you live', and 'the powerful act of doing something' one can find some of the true essence of placemaking; experiencing space, acting in space within various spatial practices, thus turning the *space* into *places*. When adding the unlimited artful ways within such practices could occur, responding to the actual needs of any neighborhood and truly engaging the community and the social groups they consist of, then they offer the potential qualities for a deeply essential *creative placemaking*.

## 1.2 Species of spaces and places

Public space has been quite a central term in countless academic discourses, the main notion in various art practices and numerous related artworks. However, it is still difficult to remain to a single certain definition since the various approaches differ. It is also quite usual that public space is often referred as opposite to private space, nonetheless this binary is also under question. Although it is true that so many traditionally open public spaces face the threat of privatization and often become privatized, in many other cases there are hybrid private-public spaces. Some historically defined examples of open public spaces are the city squares and plazas, the parks, and the pedestrian sidewalks. Shores, forests and mountains are also considered freely accessed public spaces, where no State or private interventions are allowed, at least according to the constitutions of many countries such as Greece (and despite the various interventions that occasionally take place). On the other hand, places such as museums, stadiums, theaters, restaurants or cafes might be privately owned but at the same time they are *public*, meaning that people are present and presented to others *in public* and whatever they do there is acted publicly; in public view; in front of other people. Such places are private-

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<sup>7</sup> Here citing Fred Kent (Project for Public Spaces)

<ps://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/mit-dusp-places-in-the-making.pdf>



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public places; privately owned public spaces, that differ to other public places and spaces in terms of ownership and free (and/or controlled) access.

Another remarkable case are the building facades; the buildings' exterior walls are either privately owned or they belong to the State (for example a Courthouse wall or a city hall wall), however they are in public view, thus the vertical surfaces of the buildings can also be considered public space even though they are private (or State) property. So, in its most pure form, squares, parks and sidewalks are freely accessible public spaces, while other spaces are private but still in many respects, they are public at the same time; they are both *private public spaces*. Instead of the private-public binary, Dimitris Kotsakis, former professor at School of Architecture in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, suggests that the proper dialectics should be *personal space – public space* (based on the historical division *home-city*), and *private space – state space* (based on the property owners)<sup>8</sup>. He also speaks about the *Common space*, which is the intersection of *public* and *private space*, while Stavros Stavrides, professor of Architecture at National and Technical University of Athens explains that Common space is a set of spatial relations produced by commoning practices; practices of sharing either between a community of commoners either in the form of an open network of passages through which emerging and always-open communities of commoners communicate and exchange goods and ideas opening the circles to include newcomers<sup>9</sup>.

Nevertheless, it is quite typical for artists, theoreticians, students and so on to wonder about the differences between space and place. Space is seemingly more general and in many aspects is abstract, while a place is more specific. French philosopher Michel De Certeau with his book *The practice of everyday life* was among the first ones to elaborate on the difference between the two notions.<sup>10</sup> Already, the title's word *Practice* in his book indicates the spatial

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<sup>8</sup> Kotsakis, Dimitris. 2012. *3 plus 1 essays*. Athens: Ekdoseis ton synadelfon

<sup>9</sup> Stavrides, Stavros. 2016. *Common space: the city as commons*. London: Zed Books

<sup>10</sup> Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of everyday life*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press



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practices that are possible within a city or any other space. He writes on the 'experience of space', meaning here the ways we as humans live, use and ultimately experience space. Chinese-American human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan elaborates on the *experiential perspective* in his book *Space and place, the perspective of experience*<sup>11</sup>. Again, comes Dimitris Kotsakis' insight who suggests that a *place* (in Greek: the *topos*) is the *experienced space*, a space experienced by *persons* either individually or collectively. The latter part answers to questions about *who* is experiencing space, whether that would be a single person, a group of people or any collective subject, as well as introduces matters of collective memory.

What becomes even more clear, is that the experience of space suggests a series of events in space; a vast range of *spatial practices* that contribute to our experience and eventually constitute the characteristics and the elements that define the places, and thus turn the *spaces* into *places*. According to Henri Lefebvre, physical space is not a vessel which includes the social space. On the contrary, the social space is the one that includes and constructs the physical space, and it is there where all the *spatial practices* happen and reconstruct the physical space and reshapes its social characteristics. The description of such *mechanisms* leads us back again to art in public space practices and to what is described as placemaking -which is what will be explained in the next pages. Additionally, it is worthy to remark that we do not say 'art in public *place*' but instead it is common to say 'art in public *space*', which consequently (the artwork) *makes a place*.

## 1.2 Art in public space in favor of placemaking

Investigating art in public space connects to the everyday city experience and eventually indicates the possibilities of acting in the framework of COME2ART. Creating art in public space is as complex and variable as the countless other spatial practices. Accordingly, it also involves a wide array of spatial practices not just limited to a specific type of acts, styles and techniques; it varies from traditional sculpture to contemporary art installations, from the simplest form of

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<sup>11</sup> Tuan, Yi-fu. 1977. *Space and place: the perspective of experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.



adolescent graffiti to the most elaborate tags, from graffiti ‘bombing’ and ‘street art’ stickers, posters and stencils to the graffiti productions in authorized ‘hall of fames’, from trompe l’oeil to enormous scale murals on the sides of tall buildings. It can also include video art, projections, light art, various digital media and interactive applications and of course, projects that can involve collective and/or civic participation processes. However, art in public space is in no way limited to the fine arts or to any strictly visual works. Street musicians are a typical example of how music can be also included in the family of art in the streets. The same can be said for any kind of performances; from juggling to street theater plays, from dancing break dance to tango, from conceptual acts to reading poetry in public, and countless actions an artist can imagine. To a certain extent, the same stands for activities such as skateboarding or parkour.

According to the actions just described, if on one hand there are the fine arts and any visual interventions and installations, then on the other hand there are the performative interventions. The two categories could be also differentiated by the fact that the former usually leaves a visible trace in public space, while the latter usually doesn’t. But still, there are various types of *events* that combine all of them, for example a live concert, a festival or even a party which includes both the visual, the musical and the scenographic elements; images, sound, motion, and most importantly, the essential participation of the audience; as viewers, listeners, dancers, artists and after all, active participants that contribute to the creation of the artworks, to the atmosphere and to the *vibe* as a whole, too. In other works, a whole multifaceted event can be understood as a piece of art -even though many arts and actions are incorporated. In any case, the location itself and the way it is treated for the purposes of an artwork or event are crucial.

Commenting on artful approaches and considerations, one could speak about the art of *event making*, the art of *curating*, or to return to our own project’s title, the *art of placemaking*. Anyhow, regarding the aforementioned descriptions it is fair to state that *art in public space* is not really a genre nor a specific art movement but it is primarily defined by the mere fact that it occurs in public space. Thus, it can potentially include all possible types of acts or art practices, plus the *art* of handling space itself which anyway (space) is the essential element of these artworks; the host and the ground for them to take place.



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Following the themes discussed above, a detailed examination of various artworks, events and actions is suggested before the artworks' preparations, as an integral part of the overall projects. Such case studies are always useful to our understanding of the sites and the artworks that can be placed and anything else could possibly happen there. Each one of the examined cases inevitably introduces a series of aspects, that in a multiplicity of ways incorporate mediums, strategies, ethics and aesthetics. They also introduce aspects of synergies and collectivities, the right to the city and the experience of space, and benefits to our understanding of each space and place's aspects. However, what one should keep in mind after all is that each space and place differ, and accordingly each artwork is examined in its special characteristics that are defined from the physical and social context of each place.

Discussion between supervisors and the artists, as well as between the artists and the community members is further productive and crucial for the communication among them. An indicative list of works could include a vast range of works, from the interventions Akay and Peter from Stockholm<sup>12</sup> to the installations and constructions of Brooklyn based artist Swoon<sup>13</sup>, from Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections to Jenny Holzer's appropriations of public infrastructure, from Gordon Matta-Clark to the City of Names collective installment in Berlin in 2003<sup>14</sup>, from 'guerilla gardening' practices to street parties, from local folk festivities to the events organized by IoDeposito<sup>15</sup> and Melting Pro Learning Societa Cooperativa<sup>16</sup>, from urban exploration to the art of mediating space in other artforms and platform, from outdoor music festivals to communally built playgrounds, from various gatherings and parades to the spontaneous events, artworks and performances during the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. Stavros Stavrides narrates and analyses the possibilities raised from similar examples where people of a neighborhood as well as people from other areas collectively rebuilt a whole park open to everybody, incorporating all arts from

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<sup>12</sup> Barsky Brothers. 2006. *Urban recreation: Akay & Peter = Barsky Brothers*. Årsta, Sweden: Dokument Forlag

<sup>13</sup> Klanten, Robert, and Lukas Feireiss. 2009. *Space craft. more fleeting architecture and hideouts 2 2*. Berlin: Gestalten

<sup>14</sup> Nabi, Adrian. 2007. *Backjumps - the live issue #3: urban communication and aesthetics*. Berlin: From Here to Fame Pub.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bsidewar.org/en/bside-war-en/>, also see <https://www.iodeposito.org/en/projects/bside-war-vol-ii/program/inaugurazione-dellinstallazione-darte-sensoriale-insight-di-joshua-cesa-sound-di-alessio-sorato-e-lorena-cantarut/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://meltingpro.org/en/projects/invasioni-contemporanee/>



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architecture to gardening, theater play and music. In his presentations he has also described how local festivals or even a dinner accompanied with music and dance in a public square can function to experience the city as a space of *commons*. In other examples, the element of play in artworks and activities is emphasized, as a quality and as a necessity, both for adolescent and adults.<sup>17</sup> Other cases help to understand whether murals can be either tools or signs of gentrification for an area, or whether they engage the community in possible manners.<sup>18</sup>

Their sites could be benches or bus stops, parks or playgrounds, lakes or waterfronts, bunkers or tunnels, abandoned buildings and urban ruins, small squares or monumental sites, terraces or building facades, old boats or trains, potentially everywhere and everything. Furthermore, there are various and different audiences each time in each place. Even though the works take place in specific areas, thus one of their main audiences are the local populations who might present a certain amount of cohesion, still the audience is consists of various individuals of any possible age, gender, ethnicity, cultural and social background. However, in many cases, the events and artworks refer to communities and social groups with whom they correspond and interact and this is a fact consider before planning and while acting. Ultimately, highly important is the commentary on how the artists treat their subjects whether they deal with underrepresented minorities and social groups, and relevant examples have to be discussed as well.

#### 1.4 Suggested approaches and methodologies

Through the training curriculum of COME2ART project, the artists as trainers and the trainees have to be introduced to the *learning by doing* processes.<sup>19</sup> Due to the fact that many of the participants will be young and relatively inexperienced in such processes and projects (collective, and at the same time dealing with acting in public space), and also due to the fact that art in public space often is complicated and depends to unexpected factors, the projects

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<sup>17</sup> Francis, Mark, Leanne G. Rivlin, Andrew M. Stone, and Stephen Carr. 1992. *Public space*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Pangalos, Orestis. 2020. 'From mural interventions to gentrification. Dynamics, ethics and dialectics', in Tsoukala, Kyriaki eds, *Space interweavings: ethos, spatial practices, architecture*. Conference proceedings, Thessaloniki: Epikentro

<sup>19</sup> Life skills are basic skills acquired through learning and/or direct life experience that enable individuals and groups to effectively handle issues and problems commonly encountered in daily life <https://www.britishcouncil.gr/en/life-skills/about/what-are-life-skills>





have an experimental character per se. Thus, it is more likely that the participants will really *learn by doing*, by inventing ways to create overcoming various obstacles and restrictions. Such procedures require and at the same time promote flexibility, critical and creative thinking, active listening, communication and collaboration, decision making as well as self-regulation of emotion, all of them elements considered as life skills.<sup>20</sup> In much respect the aforementioned is an innovative contribution to alternative learning practices and a sufficient method to boost community's creative resilience overall. As the Department of Urban Studies and Planning team from MIT explains, the importance of process over product in today's placemaking is a key point that cannot be overstated—and it is pushing the practice to a broader audience and widening its potential impact.<sup>21</sup>

The educational materials for the trainees should be discussed between the groups of the three participant cities (Lisbon, Thessaloniki and Treviso) while observations and consultations should be exchanged before their final shape and their presentation to the trainees. This requires further communication between the programs partners which can be achieved via online conferences. Additionally, as it was mentioned before, each partner will have to consider their own local specific features regarding public space. That said, they should emphasize on this aspect too, and accordingly integrate relevant subjects and case studies in the training programs. Last but not least, the insights provided by the *focus groups*' summary reports can be quite helpful for the preparation of the modules and the training material. The reading of each *focus group*'s primary material (either the summaries or the complete audio transcriptions) is also highly recommended for a deeper understanding of the possible participant artists (soon to become trainees and trainers) viewpoints and perspectives on the Program's subjects.

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<sup>20</sup> Sala, Arianna, Yves Punie, Vladimir Garkov, and Marcelino Cabrera. 2020. *LifeComp: the European Framework for personal, social and learning to learn key competence*. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/302967>.

<sup>21</sup> Silberberg, S., Lorah, K., Disbrow, R., Muessig, A. (2013), *Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

<https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/mit-dusp-places-in-the-making.pdf>



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After the training period, a crucial aspect, when it comes to the co-design and implementation of artistic projects is the developed communication among the team members. It is important that the participants feel comfortable from day one. An introducing point to start with should be that ‘everybody learns from each other’.<sup>22</sup> Either they are artists, community members or any other person involved in the projects, everyone has to feel and understand that she/he is important for the project -and not solely for the project’s purposes. This can result to the self-confidence, which is needed for each member in order to perform giving their best; good vibes among the practitioners can guarantee teamwork and commitment. At the same time, as it has stated above, this conduces to obtaining life skills and thus results to community resilience. Communication and positive vibes could be obtained as a result of their various meetings. Participants should not just meet in round tables but also proceed to additional parallel activities; therefore, they can potentially be creative not just during the practice of workshops but also while meeting together when -for instance- watching a film, or simply going out for any kind of activity. Having a dinner or a picnic is one of the many ways to ‘get together’ and knowing each other.<sup>23</sup> These of course could happen right after doing *on site* research about the potential places for the COME2ART mini projects and the final projects.

At the same time, while walking around, the project participants could subsequently observe and collectively experience the city, as well as discussing the projects and come up with creative ideas. Nevertheless, the mere fact that they will spend time together is beneficial for their relations, their communication and after all the projects’ progress, which is likely to benefit the creative results of any round table. Such a process is likely to contribute in the development of further relations after the projects’ implementation, which is crucial and in many respects one of the criteria for the whole program be proved successful; COME2ART purpose is after all to increase the sense of belonging, and establish dynamic synergies between different persons from all social

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<sup>22</sup> The aforementioned directly respond to *Empathy, Collaboration and Communication*. See *LifeComp: the European Framework for personal, social and learning to learn key competence*.

<sup>23</sup> Stavros Stavrides, professor of Architecture at National and Technical University of Athens in his books and presentations describes the importance of a dinner for getting together. Further on, he analyses dinners, as well as local festivities with music and dance in a public square that function to experience the city as a space of *commons*. Stavrides, Stavros. 2016. *Common space: the city as commons*. London: Zed Books



strata that will last long after its duration and will eventually create subsequent actions and synergies in community and interlocal level, too.

On the other hand, the supervising in the form of consulting and curating the actions is crucial. Here, the more experienced members that belong to the COME2ART partners could provide their expertise to coordinate the members discussions in order to realize their ideas. In any case, extensive discussions and workshops should take place and will inevitably be necessary for the implementation of the collective mini artistic projects. The choice of materials, techniques, styles, the content itself of the proposed artworks, the collective process and the engagement of the communities (and which ones), and last but not least, the choice of the location for the artworks are among the subjects to elaborate for the mini projects. In the Primary Research the multifaceted nature of such efforts was underlined.

Experience from art school projects as well as from actual artworks in real public space has shown the unpredictability of any conceived work that might not make it to be realized as it was planned in the first place. Thus, further negotiations and changes are subject to happen, and they need even further discussion among the participants, the projects' partners and any expert who will be there to help by consulting. But many of the expected possible problems can be traced beforehand, and altogether should be working on mapping and analyzing its place's potential.<sup>24</sup> Exploring and wandering the streets is one of the initial and most playful parts of the mini projects. At the same time, meeting with representatives of communities and social groups is crucially important for their active involvement, thus to engage their own cultural participation and their viewpoints. The negotiation with local administrations in order to ensure permissions is equally important for the choice of the sites to act. On another

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<sup>24</sup> Thus, the participants will be introduced to the places/spaces they could activate through the mini and the final projects and trace the potentialities they offer., Stephen Carr, Leanne G. Rivlin, Mark Francis and Andrew M. Stone in their seminal book *Public Space* they trace, categorize and analyze a great amount of places where *placemaking* occurs through the spatial practices of citizens and administrations. Francis, Mark, Leanne G. Rivlin, Andrew M. Stone, and Stephen Carr. 1992. *Public space*. New York: Cambridge University Press.



level (in an *empirical* sense of *learning by doing*, and the *experience of space*) the participants are deeply introduced to the multiplicities of space,<sup>25</sup> and of course to the complex *public-private* matters which are all crucial lessons for the any future act.

The whole process, includes the reflection on each action and the experience will all the participants gain through the process, in other words what they will also *learn by doing*. Right after, they can apply what they *learned* to what they will be *doing* in any next phase of their social and artistic life. Again, it is the synthesis of the *practice* they had and the *theories* they made themselves through the practice, that will be applied to their future *praxis*. On a technical level, it is important to keep notes in the form of proceedings, to provide questionnaires to anybody involved (for instance the local community citizens), to organize regular round tables, and to define the needs for tools and materials. Ultimately, regular communication and exchange of information and experience between the three participant cities will probably be very important for a possible *dialogue* among the projects and an even better total result for COME2ART.

Lastly, visiting, revisiting and observing is advised for the times before and during the making of the artworks. The places of course should be proposed and examined together with the community members and the representatives of any underrepresented groups. The input of the latter is what would help the artists in their understanding of each place and situation's peculiarities and vice versa, the artists would provide ways that would fit to the topics and cases. What is again underlined here is the regular communication through frequent meetings that as a whole would provide the function of a workshop. Following what has been already discussed, any problems and obstacles provide the ground for a critical discursive approach and the possibility of successful results. In many cases, the various restrictions of space come to prevent the progress of a proposed idea, the process itself can be continued on the projects'

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<sup>25</sup> The importance of public space as a foundation for good cities is recognized across Europe at a policy level and also amongst practitioners. 'Its quality is the backbone of a sustainable city'. Laven, Jeroen, Anna Louise Bradley, and Levente Polyak. 2019. "Placemaking in the European context. The movement is here to stay". *The Journal of Public Space*. 4 (Vol. 4 N. 1 | 2019 | FULL ISSUE): 135-154.



advantage. Any ‘accident’ can be turned around for the benefit of a process that was previously unimaginable; this opens up room for further creative solutions and the option of unexpected possibilities. One should have in mind that this is a *fixed idea* that might not work firsthand and the team members can build on the alternation of it, as a work that develops creatively *through the process*. Whatever the final result may be, the MIT team asserts that ‘the importance of process over product in today’s placemaking is a key point that cannot be overstated—and it is pushing the practice to a broader audience and widening its potential impact.’<sup>26</sup>

Reaching out this wider audience and ensuring a long-term impact of any creative placemaking project, depends on the level of engagement and commitment of community stakeholders who shall get involved in project’s activities. A level of social legitimization, especially when it comes to activities in public space, is crucial, not mainly during the implementation period of such activities, but mostly for the sustainability of project’s outcomes if community resilience is the desired result. The following chapter tries to analyze and propose methods for building the appropriate engagement strategy which can assure the commitment of all needed community actors.

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<sup>26</sup> Silberberg, S., Lorah, K., Disbrow, R., Muessig, A. (2013), *Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

<https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/mit-dusp-places-in-the-making.pdf>



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## 2. Building Community Engagement Strategy

The theoretical background is the basis for the development of the upcoming actions towards the implementation of creative placemaking projects. What is needed afterwards, are the specifications for creating inclusive co-creativity hubs at community level, connecting artists / cultural workers in limbo with community members. Besides the core working group of artists and young citizens, namely community members, all the necessary stakeholders should successfully get engaged and the right place where the various representatives of the community can meet, discuss and design artistic projects should carefully be chosen.

### 2.1 Planning Phase

Before any intervention activities within the community, developing an action plan of approaching and engaging the various key stakeholders can be considered as the key factor for the future success of the project. During the planning phase, developing an engagement strategy by defining the vision and specific goals in terms of expecting change that the project aims to bring in the community and setting the criteria of the targeted community stakeholders, can be considered as the first milestone for the implementation of any creative placemaking project.

#### 2.1.1 Developing Engagement strategy

##### 2.1.1.1. Vision Statement

The success of co-creative projects, based at a specific place and space, relies on the level of commitment and engagement of the local community. In our case, artistic projects aiming to foster the sense of local identity and promote community resilience, should engage in the entire process the key community stakeholders. To do it so, the aim of creative placemaking project has to be clear and the community has to feel involved in the design of the activities and the decision-making processes. A lack of vision understanding can result to distrust and low levels of community engagement.

Moreover, before the implementation of any project, should be taken into consideration the economic, political, and social circumstances not only at local level but at national and international one. Our world is so interconnected that



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whatever happens anywhere on earth directly affects people lives at any country, city or place in general.

During the last two years we all have become witnesses of such phenomena. COME2ART project is implemented at a period of economic and social instability and insecurity. The pandemic created a totally new reality where all of us had to re-think and re-design almost everything that was taken as granted till that moment, making it urgent to adjust to the new reality. Cultural and creative sector has been largely affected by COVID-19. As a result of the successive lockdowns the last two years, almost no cultural and artistic activities took place. This fact had not only a significantly negative economic but also social impact, taking into consideration the role of arts in community's wellbeing. According to the findings of the focus groups with the artists, the importance of art and culture in the community cohesion was highly mentioned. As they stated: 'Culture defines the community setting and communities are characterized by common shared customs and behaviors adopted. One can define their own group by virtue of its culture, and it exists because of art and its expression'. Countless people working on this specific sector lost their jobs or worked in terms of precarity and insecurity. For most artists and cultural workers, the direct connection with their audience, can't be easily replaced by digital means of art production.

The lack of artistic activities had a negative impact on the life of youth people, as well. As it was mentioned in the focus group with community members "The pandemic has significantly affected the need to express their feelings as, on one hand, someone felt the urge of sharing their moods with the others to seek understanding and to discuss with friends while others, instead, closed in on themselves between thoughts and feelings that were hard to deal with."

In these terms, artists role should be re-invented, exploiting new opportunities and collaboration with citizens in content creation. Simultaneously, COVID-19 forces individuals to acquire life skills (flexibility, critical and creative thinking skills) to become more resilient and creative, as crisis periods proliferate.

Based on the above, COME2ART contributes to the national and European efforts made for the societies to recover from the traumas of COVID-19 era.

Vision has to do not only with short-term community changes but long-term ones have to be highlighted, as well. Saying that, the core social impact of the project has mainly to do with the increased awareness of local and regional public authorities and policy makers in the field of culture and arts which can



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lead to institutional changes, changes that can support the social inclusion of marginalized groups and practically boost the community resilience.

### *2.1.1.2 Clarifying Project's Goals*

The vision is showing the destination, like a compass. It is a general framework of what is supposed to be achieved. However, by setting specific project goals can be seen as the steps to reach the vision. Therefore, before start approaching the main community stakeholders, it is crucial to clarify the goals of the project. A presentation of the key milestones, as well as the various stages of the project can be really helpful when meeting with the representatives of the target groups involved in the project. Being proactive to specific queries by preparing a QnA session can be proven useful.

More specifically, COME2ART project aims to engage, train and mobilize artists/cultural workers currently in limbo, helping them to undertake an active and leading role as enablers of creative resilience at local level. In that way it will respond to artists' need for alternative ways of cultural production and consumption, satisfying at the same time citizens' need for alternative ways of expression and social connection.

At the same time, providing life skills to members of local communities through artistic expression and participatory creative placemaking projects will act as a resource of personal development and community resilience.

Last but not least, connecting local artists with community organizations and citizens through inclusive co-creativity hubs, where youth can practically apply life skills and become active citizens is one more main objective that the project aims to achieve.

In conclusion, COME2ART project aims to bridge artists in limbo with young citizens in each partner city and then create co-creativity hubs, where these target groups can meet, co-design and implement artistic projects, mainly at public space. However, these working teams shall try to engage other stakeholders of the city, disseminate their message to the local society and reach out via their policy recommendations local and regional decision centers so that the social change they want to achieve, to take an institutional form. The creation of the community hubs can be considered as a priority, as the main factor which can lead to the expected result. A common space where all the



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involved stakeholders can feel safe and convenient to express feelings, thoughts and ideas.

### *2.1.1.3 Define targeted community/ies*

Each creative placemaking project has to engage specific social groups. After defining the vision and the project goals, it is the time to set which are these parts of the community COME2ART refers to and then to find ways to approach and engage them to its activities. Artists and cultural workers in limbo, community members from ethnic and cultural minorities with a special interest in arts, civil society organizations, artist networks, cultural organizations, regional and local authorities, education providers in cultural and creative sector and policy makers are the main communities that shall be involved in the implementation of the project. The above communities can be separated in two groups. The separation doesn't mean that will be given priority in one group instead of the other. All the above parts are necessary for the successful implementation of the project. Moreover, it doesn't mean that the one group works separately from the other. The categorization is made for methodological reasons since in that way it will be easier to prioritize and develop the engagement approach.

So, in the first group can be placed the artists in limbo and the community members since these are the two main groups that the project refers to. The artists having the role of the mentor and social leader will oversee the coordination and facilitation of the group of the community members. Community members, through their participation in the artistic projects, will develop life skills needed at that time of uncertainty. Artists along with community members will form working groups which will be the core, the leading team of decision making for the project. However, in order the activities of the project to get disseminated and reach wider parts of the community, the rest of the above-mentioned target groups, shall be involved.

### *2.1.1.4 Define criteria for artists and specific community groups*

#### Artists

The proposed intervention framework is strongly based and promotes the social role of artists, as leaders at community level promoting creative resilience, as inspirators of creativity expressing the emotions and struggles of society, as



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connectors of diverse social networks through cultural production and consumption promoting community building.

Reaching out the artists is something which all the partners shall do, taking into consideration the characteristics that those people may have. Artists / cultural workers in limbo, with a focus on the ones working in the field of visual & performing arts and film making, heavily affected by COVID-19 is the main target group. All involved partners should choose the artists they will work with, taking into consideration the period that they are unemployed, their vulnerability because of the long period of insecurity, their communication skills especially with youth. Moreover, since they have to train and interact with young people coming from ethnic and cultural minorities, previous relative experience would be preferable. Making clear to them how they can get benefited from their involvement in such projects can make them more motivated and committed. Exploring new ways of promoting their work in new audiences through community public art, expanding their network in European level, disseminating their art works through the social media pages of the project are some arguments that can be used when first approaching and meeting with them.

### Community members

The other main community group involved in COME2ART project are young adults, women, migrants and representatives of other cultural minorities, such as members of Romani community. Generally, the project focuses on marginalized social groups, having less chances of participation in the local social life. So the criteria here could be the inclusion and active citizenship of young people who face social discrimination, have interests in arts and culture, trying to leave back the consequences that the pandemic had on their mental health and willing to search for their personal development. Through their involvement in the project community members will acquire life skills related to self-regulation of emotions, flexibility, communication and collaboration, critical and creative thinking. Moreover, they will enhance their sense of belonging and resilience to respond creatively in current and future challenges.

### Local, national and international CSOs

As we have already mentioned above, besides the core target groups, the project has to engage parts of the wider community in order to disseminate its vision and expand its impact. CSOs working on youth sector, promoting local culture and artistic forms of expression are important allies when it comes to design and development of community-led projects. The most important



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element that CSOs can offer is the spread of news to their network and members. In that way, even wider parts of the local community will get informed about the project and can participate in the upcoming actions. Moreover, it has to be highlighted to them the benefits that they can again participating in project's activities. Exploiting the methodology for creating co-creativity hubs and the COME2ART curriculum on life skills, CSOS will enhance their services, providing opportunities for community members to develop life skills needed, and supporting artists to embrace their emerging roles in community. Moreover, since the project has a European dimension, the benefits for all involved partners have a multiplier effect.

### Regional and local authorities

The role of local authorities is really crucial when it comes to the authorization of sites in public space. Placemaking projects, since they usually take place in city's squares, parks etc., have to deal with the long bureaucratic procedures needed before any action takes place. Meeting with representatives from the municipality council or even with the local major and engaging them in the vision of the project, especially by making them realize the benefits for the local community, can be considered as a high importance factor for the success of the whole project. Local policy makers in the field of culture and arts will benefit from the policy recommendations, which can be used as a COVID-19 crisis response tool for supporting artists and cultural workers to find new ways to promote their work in new audiences. In addition, the effective involvement of community members in artistic expressions through creative placemaking, and decision-making about local cultural planning strategies, can be seen as a method to enhance civic engagement and active citizenship in community level.

## 2.2 Reaching out the targeted community groups

After developing the engagement strategy, the time has come for reaching out representatives of the needed community groups. Meeting with them, managing to build a sense of trust, making them feel part of the project and finally gaining their active involvement are some important steps to finally ensure their commitment.

### 2.2.1 *Building sense of trust*

As it has already mentioned, building a sense of trust, since the very first meeting, is important during the engagement phase. Sharing your vision,



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carefully listen to the needs and insights of the involved groups, developing a space of mutual respect, following a bottom-up approach are some elements that can lead to a sense of trust and feeling of safety. In addition, informing about the project's goals and the objectives not only for the proper understanding and the purpose of their participation but also for their informed consent can minimize the possible distress. This approach was followed for reaching out the artists and the community members who participated in the focus groups and it worked quite well. Especially, since the project involves people with a vulnerable background, the above approach process becomes even more important.

### *2.2.2 Needs' assessment*

Bottom-up approach can start with needs' assessment. The project aims to set up an active citizenship mindset. Listening to the needs that the artists and community members would like to satisfy though their involvement in the process, is when the engagement really begins. All partners should respect the local voices and carefully listen what they have to say. The focus groups that took place previous period in partner countries aimed to not only collect important data useful for the future activities but also to engage these specific groups in project's goals and vision.

Talking also about the impact of the project, implementing an engagement strategy that addresses community's challenges and re-centres the project around community needs, can encourage project legacies that last beyond the timespan of a project. Physically moving into and living within the community, investigating the desires of community members can lead to the cultivation of meaningful relationships with the participants.

### *2.2.3 Decision-making process*

Partners should not only learn about the residents but also learn from them, exchanging experiences, understanding and empathizing with the value of their subjective experiences and ensuring active involvement and/or leadership roles in the conceptualization, design and implementation of the co-creative process.



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Artists will have a leading role in the whole process; however, it doesn't mean that they can decide on behalf of the whole community.

Saying that, confirming roles and responsibilities of all involved stakeholders even on this early stage of engagement can result to productive team dynamics and avoid future misunderstandings. Artists shall train and then supervise the youth, giving them the space and autonomy to shape the artistic projects. Community members shall devote time and effort in designing and implementing artistic project under the guidelines of the artists. Policy makers shall provide their feedback and evaluate the produced artworks as well as the training methodology that was adopted. Local authorities may be constantly updated about the future activities in order to proactively access the needed site authorization. A lack of local agency over the project design and its direction can potentially result in skepticism and dis-trust of participants and, consequently, low levels of community engagement.

Policies that aspire for more participative and engaged communities can be considered as place-based; working within local contexts to build on the characteristics and culture of a place and community. This is grounded in an appreciation that much of the knowledge necessary for local development is not held by public and private institutions but embodied by people on the ground.

### 2.3 Creating the hub

After setting the terms of engagement and reaching out the desired community representatives, finding out the place where all these people can meet on weekly basis is the key point for the development of project's activities. Co-creative hubs is the heart of creative placemaking project, a place recognized by the community as the point where anyone can go, share ideas, co-design and get updated about latest news and upcoming activities of the project.

#### 2.3.1 Ethical Guidelines Protocol

At the very first meeting with all the involved participants, it is important to clearly communicate all aspects of project that are already pre-determined as described above. Even more crucial is all the participants as well as partners' staff to agree on a common framework of interaction which can cultivate a feeling of respect and safety for everyone visiting the hub during the team



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meetings. A protocol that can set the rules and responsibilities of everyone being present at the hub. As we have already mentioned above, since the project aims to engage people coming from cultural or ethnic minorities, makes the importance of a framework that can promote trust and mutual respect, even more evident. It is the ethical responsibility of partners' staff involved in the project to design the necessary tools and create an environment that is not going to cause further harm. Secondary victimization should be avoided by all means.

Saying that, consent-based approaches are needed. It has to be clear for all the participants, the processes followed and their ongoing consent for all the stages of the project. Consent should be given freely, without manipulation or coercion, and in advance of evidence collection. Consent forms shall be designed in case photos taken or there is need of a video production.

### *2.3. 2 Conversation about the process, timeline, sharing responsibilities*

Clearly share each project phase goals, a general proposed timeline, and what decisions are being co-powered together. Agreeing on a specific day of the week that the team meetings shall take place, can be helpful for the whole planning process. Moreover, establishing a specific meeting day is important for the engagement of the community, since after a moment anyone will know that, at that place, at that day and time, project's meetings take place.

Preparing and sending prior to each meeting the agenda as well as the minutes and notes from previous meeting. Consider having it in handout form or on large butcher paper to be taped to the wall. During the facilitation of meetings, consider asking someone to volunteer to take notes, preferably on butcher paper, where everyone can see what is put in writing rather than in a notebook. Keep in mind to have an extra sheet to make note of other ideas or issues which may arise that need to be addressed but may not be relevant to do so in the immediate moment.

Other responsibilities that can arise for the right preparation and during the meetings can be a sign-in sheet which can continually update internal database with contact information, a camera to document process making sure to have people's permission, some refreshments or even childcare services or activities if needed. Any supplemental materials, including flyers about upcoming events, images of the artists' previous work or anything else that can be used for dissemination causes can be also taken into consideration.



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### 3. Life skills needs and training curriculum framework

Training process is a fundamental part of COME2ART and it has to be for any other placemaking project. Artists in order to evolve in community leaders and mentors have to get trained on that. The same can be said for the community members, as well.

For this part of the intervention framework were crucial the inputs of the online survey on the training needs of community members that took place in the partner countries. The survey that was designed and disseminated in January and February 2022, focused on community's training needs for life skills promoting creative resilience, with purpose to identify existing level of **life skills** at community level, understand the **potential of arts and creativity** for their development and investigate the **impact of Covid-19** in people's lives and the role of cultural practices.

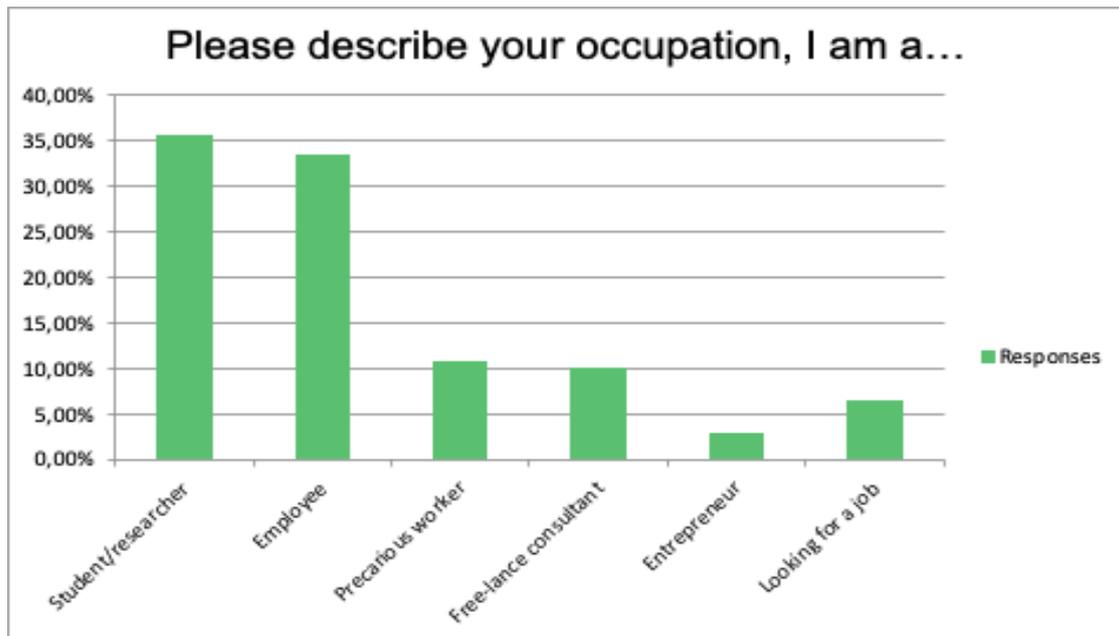
The questionnaire was based on The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn Key Competence Framework” of the European Commission that contains a set of competences applying to all spheres of life that can help citizens to thrive in the 21st Century. These key life skills grouped in 3 main areas: **Personal Area, Social Area, Learning to Learn Area**. The life skills investigated included in the training framework are: *self-emotion regulation, flexibility, wellbeing concerning the personal area; empathy, communication, collaboration concerning the social area; growth mindset, critical thinking and managing learning the learning to learn area.*

The Come2Art partners AAH, IoDeposit, Clube promoted the survey at community level, with a focus on adults aged 18-30. 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.



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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 freelance consultants (13,14%).



### 3.1 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” is the life skill, where respondents most strongly agreed on special efforts that needed to be taken. 30% of the participants felt the need to take special care of their mental health, while another 30% become more aware of the importance of taking care of their family during the pandemic. One of the hardest things they had to face were uncertainty and constantly reviewing and changing plans, affected deeply their mental health and wellbeing.



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**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 behavior that defines the life skills connected to **self-emotion 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. 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.

### 3.2 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



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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.

### 3.3 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.



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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.

### 3.4 Main findings from the analysis of the survey results

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.

If we see 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. 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.

### 3.5 Training Curriculum Framework

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



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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 and creative thinking** 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.



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To launch a **new curriculum promoting life skills development** among community members through artistic and creative practices, Melting Pro will lead partners through these main steps:

- DESIGN the COME2ART curriculum content and methodology;
- DEVELOP the materials needed by learners and trainers;
- ADAPT the way the curriculum will be delivered in 3 different countries (GR, IT, PT)

The planning phase of the training curriculum will be evolved according to the following Framework:

#### DEVELOPMENT OF COME2ART CURRICULUM PROMOTING LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Task 1: Design of pedagogic methodology and training Curriculum / Course *Outline, Methodology, Modules, Programme, Assessment framework.*

Task 2: Preparation of the educational materials for trainers and trainees *Preparation of a portfolio of training material (for trainers & trainees), and the online COME2ART course, using a learning platform to upload presentation slides, videos, case studies and assessment exercises.*

*Trainer's toolkit: pedagogic methodology, teaching methods and materials for each module, guidelines for the assessment exercises.*

*Translations of training materials in all partners' languages, that will remain open and free to the public*

#### ADAPTATION OF COME2ART CURRICULUM TO COUNTRIES' SPECIFIC CONTEXT

Task 1: Organization of adaptation workshops per country & curriculum fine-tuning

*3 adaptation workshops to greenlight the curriculum and contents through conversations between adult learning experts and artists/cultural workers.*



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### 3.6 Design of pedagogic methodology and curriculum (online course)

*Target groups:* community members (25 in each country); artists (5 in each country)

**Methodology:** the curriculum will be based on creative experiential learning, and learning by doing, while the overall delivery will be blended, with defined stages for interaction among learners and trainers, defined roles and responsibilities of both, as well as the theoretical parts to be delivered online.

Using a learner-centred model, outcome-based approach, focusing on what the learners will learn, master and be able to do as they progress through the course, the curriculum will be **adaptable, blended, clear, interactive, accessible** and it will be based on an umbrella of LEARNING OUTCOMES: life skills, digital skills, engagement skills.

The *life skills* to be developed among community members through artistic and creative practices were identified as training needs , with reference to the key competences in [LifeComp](#): The European Framework for Personal, Social and Learning to Learn, and the key components of digital competences related to artistic expression in [DigComp](#) .

When defining the learning outcomes of the curriculum some findings from the focus groups with artists and community members held in Greece, Italy and Portugal should be kept in mind:

- The pandemic increased the distance between art and people and it fastened the digitalization of the arts. It affected cultural habits in social terms, less in content. The arts kept being important because they offered deeper reflection on what was happening.
- Artistic expression found new ways to take place: from public to private spaces. It is described sometimes as a pleasure, sometimes as a need.
- When approach the relational role of artists hence educational, it is important to take into account that it is an open issue and it varies from person to person.
- Cultural participation is perceived as a practice that boosts a strong sense of belonging and inclusion of “differences”.



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- Empathy, self-reflection, collaboration, respect, continuous learning from others are life skills described as fundamental also during the focus groups.

The **learning outcomes** of the Come2Art curriculum will provide a solid base for the assessment of learning achievements, but also making sure that the learning outcome scheme is easily accessible for all the partners directly contributing to the various training modules that will be developed.

Each module is expected to have a theoretical, practical and assessment part:

- a) **Theoretical**, including case studies from other countries and theoretical background of the role of arts and creative placemaking in building creative resilience through life skills development
- b) **Practical / experiential**, including:
  - Face-to-Face training, i.e. workshops with artists on practical skills, and group work on the artistic projects
  - Digital/Virtual Classes, i.e. inviting experts or community leaders to share their experiences, and/or working in groups on brainstorming and feedback provision on mini artistic projects.
- c) **Assessment** exercises and quizzes to self-evaluate learning outcomes achievement.



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## Conclusion

Placemaking projects can promote sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and community resilience, developing and providing an attractive, innovative and inclusive learning programme for adults, to enhance their life skills and build their resilience to react to crises. COME2ART Intervention Framework as well as the future activities that will be developed and implemented try to give an extra boost towards the characteristics mentioned above.

The focus must be given on the long term impact that COME2ART aims to and the current document has been developed in that frame of future sustainability. The development of life skills of community members, the support to women as pioneers of change, and underrepresented ethnic and cultural minority groups, the enhancement of their resilience and civic engagement, can result in behavioral changes regarding effective response to crises and challenges. Trained artists and cultural workers will further extend their network and continue exchanging good practices and lessons learnt from performing their emerging roles of community educators and creativity ambassadors. The promotion and adaptation of the COME2ART intervention framework, curriculum and policy recommendations from CSOs, education providers, local and regional public authorities, policy makers in the field of culture, and associations of cultural and creative organizations in Europe, will improve the impact of arts in building community resilience, enhance current educational programmes for artists, and improve policies and measures to promote more structured interactions among artists, community members and public authorities related to re-imagination of communities and cultural planning.



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