

ART OVER PROBLEMS

This e-booklet is a product of Erasmus+ youth exchange “Art over Problems”, which took place in Lithuania (Stasiunai & Kaunas cities) on September 19-27, 2016. Project’s mission was to provide youth with new skills/tools for solving social problems by using visual arts.

E-booklet on Social Art

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Please note that the contents of this e-booklet represents only the views of its authors (see last section) and not those of the European Commission, Erasmus+ or related European bodies/institutions.

Inspiration

In the context of large inflows of refugees, European societies are currently experiencing a crisis of values, especially in relation to intolerance to other cultures, religious discrimination and inhumane actions towards people simply looking for a safer place to live in. Naturally, when a person feels safe and respected, he/she can then effectively work for the common benefit. Therefore it is necessary to address the integration of ethnic minorities and refugees. We believe that it is best to do so through social art and thus hosted a project “Art over Problems” (AOP) in Lithuania.

Objectives of the Project

By providing youth with new skills/tools for solving social problems by using visual arts, we have contributed to reducing intolerance and discrimination towards refugees and other minorities. The following objectives were tried to be achieved: 1) strengthen youth’s knowledge of the significance of visual arts and the way to use them to influence particular social issues, such as integration of refugees, as well as religious and ethnic discrimination; (2) provide them with means to share this knowledge with others; (3) encourage youth to take on more social art initiatives; and (4) generate fresh ideas for future projects and activities that would use visual arts for reaching social aims within the local communities in the participating countries. The project also aimed to help the participants grow professionally, keep them active, involve them in multi-cultural discussions, develop a number of skills and competences and create new partnerships across Europe.

Participants

36 young people coming from 6 different countries (Turkey, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Poland and Lithuania) gathered to discuss the social problems of Europe and searched for answers which would incorporate art as a tool. Most of the participants already had previous knowledge of arts, volunteering and working with minorities; thus, information sharing among them was easily facilitated. The participants were graduates of different art schools, those interested in fine arts, studying creative industries or photography, volunteers in student organisations, art exhibitions, culture labs, working with different art forms (from graffiti to photography), etc. At the same time quite a few participants have previously volunteered in refugee-related projects, worked with minorities, disadvantaged people, etc. Thus, the knowledge gained throughout the project might help in their future initiatives. Their view on the project is best represented by one of theirs quote:

“The project was both interesting and fun. There was so many creative projects involved. It's great that we mostly had to do practical workshops and organise our own social art initiatives! This will definitely help me when I'm back to volunteer in Turkey!” - Mert, Turkey.

E-booklet

The main intention of this e-booklet is to provide insights on how to organise projects for youth on social art in Europe. You will find numerous examples of social art projects created by the participants of “Art over Problems” that we hope will inspire you for further similar actions. You will also find new workshops and activities that would help you make a social art project on your own.

Project's Activities

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, a range of NFE methods developed by all the partner organisations were employed. The main activities identified the benefits of social arts, revealed best tools for their delivery, generated non-formal education methods to share the knowledge, and created the means of spreading information about the idea to the public. Involvement, creativity and initiative of all the participants was encouraged throughout the activities, which included: 1) interactive workshops on the usage of visual arts for social aims, 2) meeting social artists, 3) creation and implementation of social art initiatives; 4) country workshops on social art, and much more. Participants took part in creating 5) artistic initiatives, origami, utilizing drawing, photography, filming, graphic design, and theatrical plays to get into the project's topic. Since the project goal was to reach the public and disseminate the results effectively: 6) motivational social art photos and 7) art booklet were created. All of this ensured that the project would induce a positive effect on the participants, organisations and make an impact at the regional, national and international levels.

Some of the key activities' descriptions may be found below.

Social art Projects

During the project, participants in international teams had a chance to create their own social art projects in Kaunas city. Full creativity was allowed to find a social problem and then tackle it with different visual art forms.

Tackling Phone Addiction: Team's Comments - Through this project, we've put in the spotlight the growing problem of people spending too much time on their phones. We asked random people on the streets of Kaunas, who were using their mobile devices at the moment, one simple question: "Do you think that you are using your mobile phone too much?". Their answers were later added to the photo in a speech balloons, with the aim of making them and the people who see the photos aware about phone addiction.

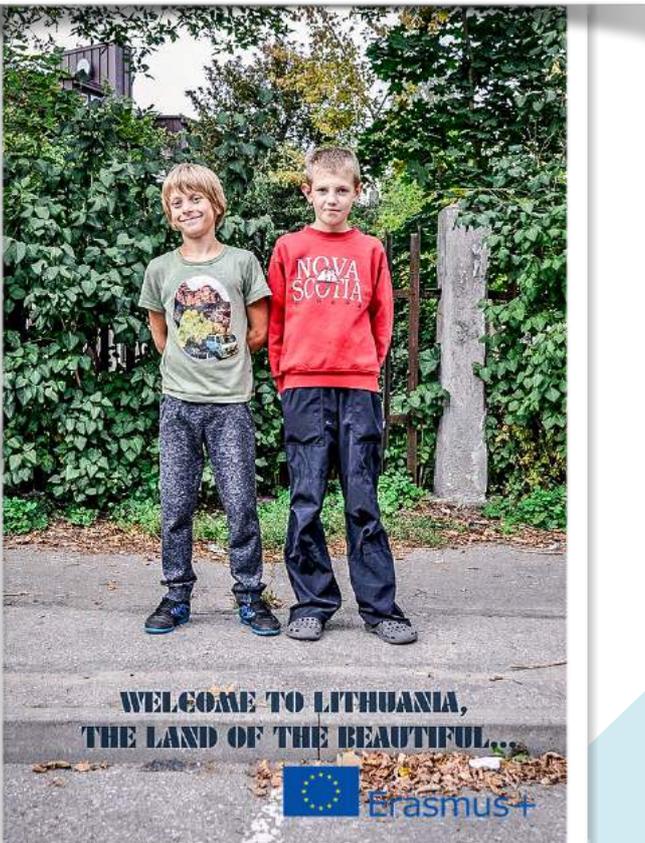




The streets of Kaunas: Team's Comments - We were trying to point out the different problems with the poorly maintained streets of Kaunas, especially the problem of the holes in the streets. We first pursued a little investigation and developed a comic using collage, photography and... a lot of imagination. Finally we decided to find a funny solution to the problem: cover the holes with bizarre surreal images in order to create a relaxed and creative environment and to fix a problem that affects all the Lithuanian streets. In order to show our idea we made some photoshopped examples.



Welcome to Lithuania, The Land of the Beautiful: simply depicting Lithuania in an interesting form - a perspective of a city wanderer. The true view is shown.



Creative Photography

Another activity that was done at the beginning of the youth exchange was the Creative Scavenger Hunt. The activity was meant for both the participants to get to know each other better, and free their creativity. Random word phrases were created and given to the participants to depict visually in a creative way. You can see how they did it below.

Given phrases: Power Punch, Life Line, Green Goblin, Close Call, Fire Flirt, Freaky Family, Water Warm, Greater Good, Crazy Cat, Tiny Talent, Sticky Situation, Simple Scam, Intimate Illusion, Chilly Chance, Tippy Trouble, Flying Force, Breaking Bad, Dream Drop, Plus Pattern, Short Success.





Art vs Problems

One of the favorite activities of the participants was the ones that included painting on canvas. First on - “Splash Art” - was dedicated for the participants to let their feelings out on canvas by creating colorful pieces of art. The idea of this activity was to consider that creation of art can be seen as a form of therapy to reduce stress and relax. Another activity was “Turn War Symbols into Piece”. Through this activity, participants were presented well-known war symbols and had to use art to change them into colourful paintings. This activity represented clearly how art can be used to eliminate hate.





Social Theater

Another activity that the participants really enjoyed was “Social Theater”. Participants in international groups had time to really get into different social problems and try to depict them through acting. This way various social topics were touched (e.g. refugee integration), and possible ways how to tackle them were identified via art.





Origami for Peace

Another interesting activity was the folding of origami doves, which the participants later hung in Kaunas, Ažuolyno Park. The key was that the origami had messages of peace and tolerance in Lithuanian and English languages, seeking to promote the message of tolerance to the visitors of the park. It was a simple, yet expressive and beautiful form of art as well as a step toward solving problems.



Information about the Project on the Web:

Click the description to open

1. Kaunas Biggest Online Media Channel About the project.
2. Kaunas biggest news site (Kauno diena) about the project activities.
3. Eurodesk Youth Portal about the Project.
4. Open call invitation to the project in Eurodesk Youth Portal.
5. Participant's Pictures on Facebook.
6. Lithuanian organisation about the project: LT; EN.
7. Klaipeda News Channel about the project activities.
8. Kaunas government about the project.

Project's Schedule, Activities & Material:

Click the description to open

1. Schedule of the Youth Exchange.
2. Info pack of the youth exchange with all the information for project participants.
3. Country workshop topics, that participants had to make interactive presentations for.
4. Example of a YouthPass that were given to the participants after the completion of the project.
5. The basics of Social Art that were presented to the participants at the beginning of the project, together with an interactive task.
6. Current knowledge assessment, which was done in the beginning of the project.
7. World Cafe Activity – list of topics & answers for non-formal discussions.
8. The basics of graphic design presented to the participants.
9. Visual workshop that could be used to discuss with others the way social art is made.
10. Best social art examples across the world found for the project.
11. How to make origami pigeons – guidelines.
12. Guidelines for the social Theatre workshop.
13. Guidelines for another theater workshop.
14. Social art Project Creation Guidelines
15. Basic photography rules presented during the project and the examples shown.
16. Teambuilding game, where one has to complete certain fun small tasks with different people.
17. Free time activity – Gossip Box, where participants can write anonymous gossips of the project.
18. Creativity Seminar to help participants think out-of-the-box.
19. Videos related to the topic that were shown in a non-formal video afternoon for the participants.
20. Session to introduce video creation for beginners (includes an Erasmus+ example).
21. Reimbursement sheet for participants to fill in their travel details (could be used in any other similar projects).

About Organisers

“Active Youth” Association (Asociacija “Aktyvus jaunimas”) is a non-profit organization based in Kaunas that unites young leaders from Lithuania willing to work on a voluntary basis to facilitate an intercultural dialogue and enhance competence of the European youth. We cooperate with organizations of similar profile from all over Europe (more than 50 partnerships) to organize events and trainings using non-formal education as a powerful instrument to encourage youth to take an active part in a society. By doing this we help young people to improve their skills and social awareness, share experiences and ideas, integrate them within the multinational environment of the EU, facilitate cooperation, create new joint initiatives, increase their social awareness, and promote healthy lifestyle. In particular, we concentrate on youth (18-30 years old) that have fewer opportunities and/or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Generally, our aims are to: (1) enhance entrepreneurial, social, leadership, communication skills, self-esteem, as well as multilingualism of youth through non-formal education; (2) help youth increase their social awareness, be tolerant towards others, be aware of the persisting social and environmental problems and help solve them; (3) educate youth workers and youth on how to join volunteering initiatives, cooperate with each other, and get employed more easily; (4) organize joint campaigns, projects and activities, where young people and youth workers can get involved in an intercultural dialogue, be a part of the decision making process, develop the spirit of volunteerism, facilitate youth cooperation and social values; (5) raise awareness about EU citizenship among young people, educate about social responsibility and work towards reducing youth unemployment in the EU; (6) organize youth seminars, exchanges, trainings for youth workers, conferences and discussions on relevant social topics, promote healthy, active, and ecologically friendly lifestyle in order to increase the well-being of youth. Inform about similar actions organized by others in Europe; (7) defend and promote human rights, universal values of tolerance, active citizenship, democracy, equal opportunities and work towards the elimination of discrimination in order to build a better integrated society; (8) organise Erasmus+ projects and spread information about the opportunities that lie behind it in order to further facilitate youth development.

Apart from other activities, we have also hosted Erasmus+ youth exchanges and youth worker mobility projects in Lithuania addressing key social topics for youth. Firstly, we organised a youth exchange on tolerance for minorities ("Let's Turn Discrimination into Tolerance"), where young people gathered to help the minorities across Europe integrate easier to the society and get better opportunities both in social and work life. Secondly, we have organised both youth worker mobility and a youth exchange on the topic of Social Entrepreneurship ("More than Money: Social Entrepreneurship Heroes"). Since then we have hosted 7 more Erasmus+ projects (as of July 2016).

More on us: <http://activeyouth.lt/en> or <https://facebook.com/activeyouthlt>



Active Youth

Erasmus+ projects