



# Manual for creative partnerships for social space-oriented cultural youth education



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# Abstract

The Manual for creative partnerships for social-space oriented cultural youth education was developed as part of the project Your Space – Art and culture as a door opener for enhanced social inclusion of disadvantaged young people co-financed by the Erasmus+ Program in Key Action 2 - Cooperation partnerships in youth, led by BGZ Berliner Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit mbH (Berlin, Germany), in partnership with Outreach gGmbH (Berlin, Germany), Młodzieżowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy Nr 2 and Fundacja Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej (Warsaw, Poland), Fundación MUSOL and Asociación Integra2 Mundo (Valencia, Spain).

The Manual represents a **practice-based resource** beneficial to foster cooperation between actors from (formal and non-formal) youth **education and the arts** and culture sectors, with the overall scope **to increase the quality and impact of participatory learning offers to target disadvantaged young people**.

The innovation in the approach relies on **the (mobile) work in the social space** and relies on **participatory creative and artistic practices**. These **enable, empower and connect youth** between themselves and their peers: creative methods promote active youth participation based on individuals' creative **potentials and competencies**, they also initiate (or enhance) the development of **soft social skills** building on collaborative and participatory practices, and ultimately contribute to **building resilience**, through the facilitation of every-day **tools to cope with social challenges**. Youth resilience and social skills constitute much-needed resources to strengthen **youth's sense of belonging** to local communities and (peer)groups, **youth's sense of purpose** and interest in shaping new positive life perspectives for the self and others (their communities). Disadvantaged Youth are experts in their living environments and are empowered to build upon their (hidden) potential to activate **social well-being** and prosperity, leaving no one (youth) behind.

Innovative aspects of paramount relevance showcased in the Manual are a) the contextualised declinations of the **Social Space-Oriented Approaches**, targeting specific local milieus in Germany, Poland and Spain where young people meet and grow (beyond formal education contexts), b) the focus on Diversity & Inclusion, targeting all those young individuals whom for whichever reason dropped-out of traditional education and recreation infrastructures and experience stigmatisation and social exclusion on a daily basis. The Practical Cases Studies present **good practices from practitioners' experts in the field of youth work and culture** with extensive experience in developing and testing tailored tools and methodologies fostering young people' **engagement, empowerment and connectedness**.

Central to the Your Space project and fundamental to the manual is a strong emphasis on **Youth with Fewer Opportunities** as creators of their own learning experience. In this case, **educators, social workers and creative actors are mentors and facilitators** who give more lead to the young people, following their wishes and needs, boosting their potential, creativity and openness via different tools and methodologies which will also be presented in this Manual, and **adjusting at all stages** to the ever-changing youth world's vision.

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# Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of the Manual and needs assessment

The Manual for creative partnerships for social-space oriented cultural youth education was developed as part of the project Your Space – Art and Culture as a door opener for enhanced social inclusion of disadvantaged young people. It represents a **practice-based resource** beneficial to foster cooperation between actors from (formal and non-formal) youth **education and the arts** and culture sectors, with the overall scope **to increase the quality and impact of participatory learning offers targeting disadvantaged young people.**

The innovation in the approach relies on **the (mobile) work in the social space** and relies on **participatory creative and artistic practices**. These **enable, empower and connect youth** between themselves and their peers: creative methods promote active youth participation based on individuals' creative **potentials and competences**, they also initiate (or enhance) the development of **soft social skills** building on collaborative and participatory practices, and ultimately contribute to **building resilience**, through the facilitation of every-day **tools to cope with social challenges**. Youth resilience and social skills constitute much-needed resources to strengthen **youth's sense of belonging** to local communities and (peer)groups, **youth's sense of purpose** and interest in shaping new positive life perspectives for the self and the others (their communities). Disadvantaged Youth are experts in their living environments and are empowered to build upon their (hidden) potentials to activate **social well-being** and prosperity, leaving no one (youth) behind.

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### **INNOVATIVE SOCIAL SPACE-ORIENTED APPROACH**

Approaching young people in a participatory and inclusive manner requires approaching them directly in the social context where they are, and this becomes even more crucial when the environment they are situated in is characterized by a pervasive sense of social exclusion, discrimination emerging from migration of different cultural identity, and where generalised and long exposure to lack of acceptance and acknowledgment of value and potential constitute the major challenge the young people face daily. Young voices have the right to be heard, listened to and cherished to flourish. Regrettably, in the spaces where vulnerable youth are what they experience is instead the result of the disfavoured environment, lacking of inclusive mechanisms of support (beyond the formal education system).

The key challenge addressed by the Your Space young participants was to find access point and tailored support to counter negative attitudes surrounding them, to channel feelings of frustration and despair resulting from experienced stereotypes and discrimination into propulsive energy to fuel positive further pathways of growth and self-development. Vulnerable youth drop out or miss the opportunity to access formal education offerings, they rely on mobile (street) youth work supporting mechanisms capturing the youth in their fluid environment: their social space, where they feel safe and secure to express themselves.

In this context, trainers, coaches, mentors, youth workers, and creative actors as professionals who empower and treat youth from closeness and proximity may feel the necessity in positive interactions with one another to effectively support vulnerable youth. This collaboration within the social space let them immerse themselves into the reality and difficulties the vulnerable youth is facing, understands better “the roots” of their disruptive behaviour, if it’s a case, and let them showcase their capabilities and talents through the use of art and culture.

Social Space-Oriented approach constituted a dynamic and forward-thinking response to the rapidly changing visions and challenges of the young people. Having acted within the scope and rules of the social space young participants gained more captivating perspectives on training and competence acquisition, learned the bigger picture behind community engagement – where community was the one right around them and their families, and got motivated to experiment with creative languages and tools, to share their aspirations and messages with a (peer) community of creatives.

In the following sections of this Manual, we will delve deeper into the concept of the **social space an adaptable environment for young people** and its variety of dimensions on the example of contexts of Germany, Spain and Poland, where vulnerable youth originating from Roma community, with Migration background or under the protection of the Court for Minor were invited to take part of this creative learning experience, both receiving and imparting knowledge, cultivating artistic and cultural practices, engaging with a variety of actors and local community and, through their personal development, contributing to building a more inclusive society.

The social space-oriented approach transcended the physical boundaries of a state youth education facility, a day care centre, or the streets of Kreuzberg in Berlin; it expanded to encompass digital (music and film) platforms, public urban stages, neighbourhoods festivals and public spaces, and pop-up community settings, to embrace the transformative learning experiences undertaken by the Your Space Youth at the intersection between art and education, and to subsequently apply

these experiences in our societies, allowing us to actively participate in reshaping the social environments.

### **ADDRESSING ART AND CULTURE AS POWERFUL TOOL FOR PUBLIC GOOD**

Key for Your Space was to highlight the **potential of cultural and creative activities** to facilitate and enable a rich diversity of form of youth expressions. As a result of the pandemic, beyond the overall difficult contexts in which the youth meet and act, a growing ecosystem of artists and creative actors proved their ability to positively contributing to the lives of young people (and their communities). **Art** is at the foundation of **social resilience**, support youth sense of **connectedness** and facilitate active participation for the attainment of **individual well-being** through experimentation and freedom of expression.

Challenges faced by the young participants in their social spaces reminded the Your Space team that culture is today more than ever a powerful tool to attain public goods. Art and culture unveiled profound local (and global) youth narratives, with profound implications for our society as a whole. Artists and cultural practitioners at Your Space manifested a strong commitment to embark in international cultural cooperation and to continue being open to learn from diverse youth pedagogies and methods. A dynamic dialogue between cultural and social tools and modes operandi was the start of the journey of Your Space. The quest for ever-changing infrastructures and shared capacities supported the team of artists and creatives to structure their cultural and creative offers around the abilities and interests of the young people and the educators (youth and social workers). Different capability to create, produce, and disseminate opened up pathways of access for diverse young creators, and enabled audiences to benefit from diverse cultural experiments. Artists have the tools and potential to **continue engaging a variety of different (youth) actors** (but also educators, social workers, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations, civil servants, entrepreneurs, communities, etc.) in an inclusive, participatory manner, and activate their respective creative potentials to increase their participation and awake their interest in community development. Artists accompanied the youth in a journey towards acquisition of (necessary) social and artistic skills, including furthering basic knowledge and interests in technical and entrepreneurship skills. The creative drive proved to be successful in channelling creative interests towards employment opportunities in the culture and creative sector, or simply proved enhanced communication with one another or within peer communities. The step ahead leading young to reach out to the public and society at large.

### **DIVERSITY & INCLUSION 4 CREATIVITY**

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges for a ‘just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which **the needs of the most vulnerable are met**’. Improving access to education and recreational offers for youth in fragile contexts contributes to the wellbeing of **diverse groups** in society. Diversity was tackled in the Your Space project not as a challenge, instead as an **opportunity and enriching factor** for (young) individuals and youth groups. Starting point was to support diversity education and inclusion of everyone, by **strengthening individual (young) talents**, also when they were still hidden or not yet acknowledged by the youth as valuable. Raising awareness regarding the potential strengths and capabilities of young people was an essential prerequisite for the growth and development of all participants within Your Space. Despite a broad call for action and sensitisation at social level, vulnerable young people continued to drop-out or could not find access to (traditional, formal) conducive education environments in their immediate surrounding. This led many young people to continue experiencing a **sense of**

**despair, frustration, exclusion and marginalisation**; youth participants were facing stereotyping and discrimination, were victims of manifestation of intolerance, hate speech and violence.

The Your Space team committed to inclusive youth education as the foundation for an education offer of good quality that allowed every youth to identify and **fulfil their potential**. Learner diversity in profile, path of life, and interests was seen as a great opportunity to **embrace diversity and let flourish diversity of artistic expressions**. Inclusive artistic and social space-oriented approaches ensured that youth **of different levels of ability** and interests were tackled in education offers **tailored to and responsive to all youth' needs and potentials**.

Throughout the process diversity and inclusion remained quintessential values of the social-spaces, whether intentionally acknowledged within the scope of the artistic practices or emerged organically among young individuals with diverse backgrounds (e.g. Roma community in Burjassot, communities of Turkish migration background in Berlin Kreuzberg). **Diversity was progressively valued** as it **built bridges** with and **anchored** youth creative experiences to the local (in some case also to the digital) communities. In comparison with mainstream approaches, **inclusive social-spaces** recognise that every individual brings unique perspectives and experiences to the table, generating a safe space that encourages freedom of expression and experimentation. The creative partnerships between educators and artists contributed additional (high quality) impulses to the social-spaces, empowered and mentored young talents, stepping back from a leadership or hierarchical role. The Manual presents strategies and good practices actively fostering diversity and inclusion within social-spaces, contributing to the **flourishing of a diverse and inclusive future for all**.

## 1.2. Overview of the contents

The Manual is divided into several sections:

- **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**. Within this section, we will commence by thoroughly examining the core concepts integral to this project. This includes the definition of the social-space oriented approach and cultural youth education, an identification of the target groups engaged in our creative partnerships, with special attention to youth with fewer opportunities as the ultimate beneficiaries. Furthermore, we will revise the supporting policy framework at the EU level and elucidate the strategies and programs with which this project is harmonized. Especially, in this section we will delve into the detailed exploration of the specific contexts of each creative tandem from Germany, Spain and Poland, the characteristics of their social spaces, the development of cultural youth education, and the degree to which artistic activities have been incorporated into the formal or non-formal educational processes. Furthermore, we will also consider the national frameworks with which this project aligns, and find out both the limitations and opportunities that each tandem faces.
- **CASE STUDIES**. This section forms the central core of the Manual, offering an experience-based methodology and resources for integrating artistic activities within social spaces through creative partnerships among stakeholders from both formal and non-formal youth education, as well as the arts and culture sectors. Our approach begins by presenting an overview of three distinct case studies implemented in Germany, Spain and Poland by the

participating organisations, carefully identifying their commonalities and differences in terms of context, target groups, methodologies, and more. Subsequently, we dive deeply into each case study, providing comprehensive insights, including step-by-step methodologies, learning objectives, strategies for engaging other stakeholders and local community representatives, an exploration of how the specific needs of young individuals were addressed throughout the process, a description of the participation mechanisms employed, an analysis of the social, creative, and technical skills fostered among vulnerable youth during the implemented activities, a reflection on any adaptations or synergies experienced by creative partners during the case study implementations, and much more.

In addition, we will consider additional examples of creative partnerships both of participating organizations and of other stakeholders in order to detect good practices and outcomes. By analysing the implemented case studies and insights from other creative partnerships, we suggest a series of practical recommendations of these practices and explore their adaptability across diverse contexts. The critical analysis will also include opportunities, limitations, short-term and long-term impacts, both on the young participants and the collaborative actors within these creative partnerships.

- **CONCLUSIONS.** In summary, we will conclude by underscoring the significance of cultural youth education, drawing from both our own creative partnerships' experiences and general conclusions derived from other stakeholders' experiences.

Additionally, you will discover several comprehensive appendices, including:

- *Glossary of Terms:* A comprehensive reference guide that provides clear and concise definitions of key terms to address any uncertainties.
- **Recommended Resources for Further Reading:** We are pleased to offer a curated list of additional resources and reading materials that can deepen your understanding and exploration of the topics covered in this Manual.
- **Evaluation and Assessment Tools:** Practical tools and guidelines designed to assist you in evaluating the effectiveness and impact of your creative partnerships and social space-oriented cultural youth education initiatives. These resources will help you assess outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and refine your strategies for future endeavours.

This Manual is an integral part of a wider project aimed at improving your understanding of the topic, which covers:

- *Social Space-Oriented Scenarios for Engaging and Empowering Disadvantaged Youth through Arts and Culture* that include a series of outcomes derived from the implementation of three case studies in the form of produced video materials, photos, music, etc. In the section 3 while describing case studies, you will be able to familiarize yourself with each of them visually.
- *Training Modules for Youth and Creative Actors to Work with Disadvantaged Youth* that consist of online capacity-building programme for youth workers and creative and artistic



professionals who want to replicate the methodologies of creative tandems, adapting them to their local contexts and specific target groups.

- *White Paper on the Future of Cultural Youth Education - Conclusions and Recommendations* for shaping the further design of the social space-oriented cultural youth education, serving as a resource for decision-makers with influence on the local youth work and cultural sector.

With this overview in mind, let's continue our exploration of the manual's contents and insights.

## 1.3. Who is this Manual for?

This manual is designed to serve a wide range of professionals, stakeholders and individuals interested in improving their knowledge and experience in the field of cultural youth education oriented to social spaces. The target groups of this manual include:

*Youth Workers:* Youth workers engaged in formal or non-formal education settings, as well as those working within community-based organizations, who seek innovative approaches to engage and empower disadvantaged youth.

*Creative and Artistic Professionals:* Individuals from the arts and culture sectors, such as artists, cultural educators, and creative facilitators, who aim to collaborate with youth and contribute to their personal and cultural development.

*Educators and Teachers:* Formal educators and teachers looking to integrate creative and artistic methods into their educational practices, fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment.

*Community Organizers and Leaders:* Professionals involved in community development and social inclusion initiatives, who wish to employ arts and culture as tools for empowerment and community building.

*Policymakers:* Decision-makers within the domains of youth work, education, and cultural affairs who seek insights into innovative strategies for promoting cultural youth education and social inclusion.

*Researchers and Academics:* Scholars and researchers focusing on youth development, cultural education, and innovative pedagogical approaches, who can benefit from the practical insights and case studies presented.

*Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):* NGOs dedicated to youth empowerment, arts and culture, inclusion or community development, who are eager to expand their toolkit with effective methodologies.

*Students and Learners:* Aspiring professionals, students, and lifelong learners interested in gaining a comprehensive understanding of social space-oriented cultural youth education and creative partnership practices.



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