



Art Hubs for Youth

Output One

Research Report



This report was researched and compiled between May and December 2021. The research was carried out by KMOP (Athens, Greece), SMOC (Sarejevo, Bosnia Herzegovina), Hub Nicosia (Cyprus) and University of Gloucestershire (UK).

The partners would like to thank all who gave their time to take part in focus groups and interviews, and for generously sharing their knowledge and experience.

- Herzegovnia

Summaries of reports.

Part 1. Sample sizes

Each organisation was tasked with talking to a range of people who had worked with marginalised groups (including, but not limited to, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant groups) either in the context of social support or, creative projects and schemes. The project document stated :

“Field work will be carried out in every country participating in the project implementation according to the methodology and tools for the field work developed by UOG It will be based on questionnaire survey in every project country to define:

- 1) Perceived the needs of art professionals working with youth migrants*
- 2) Inputs by experts on the field: youth trainers, art professionals, intermediary organisations, trainers, policy-makers about needed skills for green mentors.”*

Due to the Covid pandemic affecting all the partner countries, it was often challenging to find people who could participate, especially for face to face meetings; much of the research was therefore carried out online. This was not the preferred option as we would have expected the dynamic of people meeting in a room to generate a free discussion that is not always possible with an online meeting, as well as perhaps giving an opportunity for social networking amongst participants. The discussions reached a broad cross section of participants across the partner countries and this gave us, we feel, a rich set of sources for our research.

Summary of participants.

Organisation	Focus groups/ interviews	Numbers of people taking part	Type of work
KMOP, Athens	Focus groups	10	Workers from a range of social support situations, working with broad range of marginalised groups.
	Interviews	10	The sample included artists with exceptional art studies in Europe and the United States, focusing on visual arts and merging technological elements in their art works. Forms of arts that the sample practice are included: painting,

			photography, illustration, videography and sculpture.
Hub Nicosia, Cyprus	Focus groups	10	A range of youth and arts workers
SSK	Focus groups	8	professional artists and photographers or community leaders
	Interviews	8	professional artists and photographers or community leaders
Uni of Glouc.	Focus groups	4	Arts workers, experience of community projects / marginalised groups
	Interviews	9	Volunteers and organisers for refugee community groups, workers in theatre and drama projects, and photographers, or artists using photography, and academics and educators in formal institutions (photography / media).

Part 2. Previous projects undertaken by participants in the surveys

The range of projects that our contributors have worked on ranged widely and with a diverse range of groups. These included:

- refugees, living both in the community and in camps
- unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers
- those with mental health issues and autism
- children and youth
- people living in remote rural areas
- women who were victims of gender based violence
- the elderly
- Roma
- homeless people
- people in prison
- workers in formal education (schools, colleges, universities)

The social support project that our participants worked on included :

- language support and communication skills

- mindfulness
- business development skills and entrepreneurship
- awareness raising through discussions and publishing writings about experiences of refugees and others
- social care
- child care
- religious groups

The types of creative projects that our participants had worked on included:

- visual art projects with, eg, photography (digital and analogue), painting, graphic design, fashion shows
- video projects
- performance art projects, including, eg, dance, improvisation, theatre
- music
- computer projects
- magazine making
- street and community arts
- art therapy
- textiles

For a more detailed list of responses, please see appendix 1

Part 3. Key social needs identified by the participants.

This part of the research was more specifically directed to work with refugees, highlighting their needs in particular, and in some cases would be less applicable to other marginalised groups.

The needs identified were often these were slightly different expressions of similar themes, and most needs were identified by the partners across all four countries taking part; there were only a few that appeared to be country specific, these are listed below. The most frequently mentioned were as follows.

Language: this was fundamental to many of the issues that refugees in particular faced and identified in all the partner's surveys. Learning the local language was seen by participants as crucial to both gaining employment, and to social integration. Without the ability to speak the language of the country that they lived in, refugees were often isolated and unable to socialise outside of their immediate community. Employment issues were related to this;

cases were cited where arrivals needed a knowledge of the technical language associated with the skill (eg someone who was a car mechanic in his own country but needed to learn the associated words in the local language). [conclusion – how work can address this]

The need for support with **computer skills** were particularly mentioned in Greece and UK. [address in eg zine module ?]

Lack of self-confidence among refugees; lack of self-esteem, isolation and mental health issues arising from this was a common theme in all countries. [conclusion – how work can address this – therapeutic mod and others]

Integration – refugees often were not integrated into local communities. Sometimes this was because of local anti-refugee attitudes (which were inflamed by, eg, some politicians); lack of respect for diversity or knowledge of other cultures. Religious differences was also mentioned in Cyprus. The need to feel embraced and accepted by the local community was a strong theme, expressed in slightly different ways in all the surveys.

[conclusion – how work can address this]

Lack of access to local resources and support was frequently mentioned, especially in relation to housing, education, employment, disability. Participants in both Greece and UK singled this out; in Bosnia Herzegovina material needs generally were identified.

Finally, often mentioned was the need for refugees to be able to **express their situation and counteract negative perceptions of themselves** as individuals and as a community.

The problems of the **Roma community** in Bosnia Herzegovina were discussed (SMOC provided some wonderful examples of the results of video projects made with those affected by this:

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/536522718>

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/533585360>

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/561574827>

Ranking of social needs.

Participants were given a list of social needs and asked to rank these in order of importance. The sample asked in each country was fairly small and there was some divergence in responses across the partner countries

- “Learning skills to enter education or professional work” was overall most highly rated;
- “Self-awareness – confidence to present self to own or wider community” came second, followed by
- “Self-awareness – confidence to present self to own or wider community.”

The small sample and response rate (some interviewees in, eg, UK , did not wish to respond to this question) makes this somewhat inconclusive, but even so, worth noting.

Professional training. Regarding professional training, it should be said that the Transit Tales web site (see pg 15) notes that those undertaking the courses should not have their expectations unrealistically raised; we would not be seeking to offer professional level photography skills (though the courses might be a gateway to further training or study), but we would expect that language, social benefits and confidence building should indirectly contribute to better education and employment in the longer term.

For a detailed break-down of ranked responses by partner, please see appendix 2

For a fuller list of responses on social needs, please see appendix 3

Part 4. Benefits of Art / Photography work for refugee / marginalised groups

Participants who had worked on creative projects were passionate and articulate about the benefits of arts work with refugee and other marginalised groups, with many examples cited. There was a strong agreement about the ability of arts project to **build confidence, to enhance integration, to improve language skills, and to raise self-awareness and improve mental health.**

Benefits identified included (in no particular order) –

Helping to bring about integration

Teaching new skills

Engendering a sense of belonging

Providing a new perspective

Developing self awareness

Developing self expression

Developing language and communication skills (often indirectly)

Exploration of new cultures

Building self-confidence

giving a sense of pride in achievements

Improving mental health, therapeutic effects (eg, externalising thoughts and perceptions that had been internalised)

Having some fun

Building optimism

Gaining trust

Helping to build a new identity

Building leadership, problem solving and critical thinking skills

Bringing about awareness of issues around refugee and marginalised groups to the wider community

Contact with others

For a more detailed list of responses to the question on potential benefits, please see appendix 4

Part Five. Learning from Previous Projects

Drawing on the rich and diverse experiences of our participants, we asked what we could learn from their previous work. Some key points were:

- Ensure that there is awareness of the needs of different cultural groups – eg the need to be sensitive to the timings of sessions, awareness of religious festivals etc, needs of different genders
- Do not be over technical, ensure that sessions are fun and enjoyable
- The need to gain trust
- Organisation
- Allow enough time
- Building in sustainability – projects need to have a longer life than a few organised sessions
- Listening – being responsive

- the importance of the group taking a leading role in the direction of the sessions – giving ownership of the project.
- Ensure there is a sense of inclusivity - make people feel welcomed and appreciated
- Ensure that the benefits are available to all who take part
- Use the work to bring about wider knowledge and understanding of the participants' world to the broader community
- Create a social and networking space
- Be clear in advance about, eg, commitment, costs etc
- Language – be prepared for problems – use, eg, visuals and translators
- Make a safe, non- intimidating environment.
- Cultural mediators may be needed – eg with children who may be afraid to express themselves
- The need to accept oneself in the social community and the need for others to accept people
- Don't have preconceived ideas about outcomes – be flexible, do not over plan, allow space to work instinctively

Some participants talked about groups that were reluctant to participate – eg because they felt that art was a luxury and they had to prioritise necessities.

For a more detailed list of responses about learning from previous projects, please see appendix 5

Part six.

Ideas for future projects.

There were many suggestions for future projects. A small selection of these includes:

- Finding out the groups common interests (Eg including sports, food etc) and use this as a basis for work
- Making collages - cutting up magazines
- Making podcasts
- Getting people to photograph themselves in front of local landmarks to create a sense of belong

For a more detailed list of ideas for future projects, please see appendix 6

Dissemination and Legacy

Our researchers asked about legacy and dissemination. *“We are interested in other ways of getting work to an audience that might have a local impact. Do you have any thoughts on the most relevant (to the participants) place to show the outcomes of future projects”*

This section provided no clear answer with every partner’s survey giving a different result. The idea of exhibiting or disseminating the work appeared fairly high up in all the lists, though this varied between exhibitions, social media and publications (books or zines). Developing skills to make photos on a phone was fairly highly ranked, as was further training in photographic techniques. Having an end goal at the end of the project in order to engender a sense of achievement was mentioned.

Probably because of the wording of the survey, few picked up on the idea of an international dissemination of the work through web sites / online galleries, social media. This perhaps was an area we could have investigated more as this will be pursued in Outputs 2 and 3 of the Art Hubs for Youth project.

For a more detailed break-down of the rankings on dissemination and legacy, please see appendix 7

Overall conclusions from the survey.

There was a rich set of information gathered from the focus groups and interviews and this gave us valuable insights for the design of the training modules in Output 1.

As stated above, the training does not ultimately aim to train marginalised groups as professional photographers (though not to exclude this as an outcome after further specialist training or study). Our primary concern is to think how our project can respond to the social needs of marginalised groups.

Language: for refugees and asylum seekers in particular language is a major obstacle to integration and employment. Our module design would have to be sensitive to the needs of those with little or no fluency in the native language of the place where they are living; use of visuals and non- technical language, and allowing time were identified as some of the ways that this could be addressed. More broadly, some of the modules we are designing might specifically help with acquiring language skills to different levels – in particular, *Social Media* and *Designing Zines* might be a place where this comes in (eg through use of text in different languages).

Lack of self-confidence. The general therapeutic effects of arts projects are widely attested to by our respondents. Making our trainees aware of the need to be sensitive to this aspect will be important (eg in the *Overview Module*). Respondents discussed the need to cater for a range of personalities including those who are less confident or more introverted; also that some genres suit some personality types more than others. (for example it may take more initial confidence to make work as a documentary or portrait photographer though many would welcome the opportunity for social interaction that this offers; some may feel less inhibited working in, say, mixed media work). The *Sense of Place* module has the potential to help recent arrivals to find out about an area and its cultural currents, and perhaps build a sense of belonging. Building in projects with a defined local outcome (such as an exhibition, a zine or a social media site) to bring about a sense of achievement would appear to be an important strategy. The international dissemination designed by Artit could use any work generated through this to further enhance this aspect.

The need to express their situation and counteract negative perceptions of themselves as individuals and as a community. Photography provides an accessible public platform where marginalised groups can explore and assert a positive identity and this should clearly be embedded in the ethos of the training. The modules where this might be particularly relevant are *Documentary* and *Portraiture*.

Recommendations