



GOOD PRACTICES
 IN THE FIELD OF ACCESS TO ART EDUCATION
 FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL DISABILITY

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www.centredelagabrielle.fr

www.lebenshilfe-salzburg.at

www.scuolaviva.org

www.kunstpodiumwillemstad.nl

www.vaimukad.ee

Study Visits in Mental Disability Art Practices is a project funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

The project

The SVMMDAP (Study Visits in Mental Disability Art Practices) is a European mobility project funded by the sub-program Grundtvig of the Lifelong Learning Program. This project enables the mobility of staff involved in art education for people with Intellectual Disabilities in order to exchange on good practices

The objectives of this project are:

- **Create a European work experience** for all the participants, in another type of establishment accompanying persons with intellectual disabilities, in another European country, in order to enhance their working competences in the field of Visual and Digital Art.
- Enable an **exchange of practices** between Visual and Digital Art training or education providers, professional artists working with persons with intellectual disabilities, between the establishments, and more widely, between all the European Visual and Digital Arts actors.
- **Raise awareness of national, regional or local stakeholders**, on the professionals or volunteers, working with persons with intellectual disabilities in this particular domain, by making an event (national, regional or local) during the visit, in order to enable each partner to present his establishment, his working methods, the benefits of these methods for the persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Bring some **changes in the attitudes and professional positions** of people working with adults with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities in Europe and to recognize them as "people able to do" (to learn, to create, etc.).

The partners

The project involves 5 European partners from different countries that are actually providing services for People with Intellectual Disabilities, and that all have in common a special interest and focus on Art. Thus they are facing daily the challenges linked to the issue of making art and art education accessible to People with Mental or Psychiatric Disabilities.

- **Centre de la Gabrielle - MFPass, France**

The Centre de la Gabrielle – MFPass is a multi service care provider for more than 500 children, teenagers and adults with learning and intellectual disabilities. It employs 250 staff and houses twelve medical and social non-profit establishments and services. Art is present in all these facilities, but two of them in particular have placed Art at a central place.

The "*Art & Life Home*" targets young adults with intellectual disabilities and offers them accommodation and support in their daily life, with the goal to achieve each's project life. Artists accompany them to enhance their creativity and, through visits and exchanges, foster their education, sensitivity and creativity.

The Day unit "*Colours and Design Workshop*" is intended to ageing adults with intellectual disabilities. It offers a specialized support around daily arts activities.

The organization advocates for the rights of people with mental disabilities at national and international levels. It is a member of Social Economy Europe and of EASPD¹.

- **Lebenshilfe Salzburg, Austria**

Lebenshilfe Salzburg gemeinnützige GmbH is an Austrian organization, providing services for people with intellectual disabilities locally in the communities throughout the Salzburg region. The organization employs 710 staff and provides a large range of services: early intervention for 200 families, therapies for 2000 patients per year, family counselling with 1500 contacts per year, housing services for 360 residents, occupational services for 680 users.

The organization is member of the national umbrella organization "Lebenshilfe Austria" and of international networks (EASPD, Inclusion). Workshops have been organized bringing together artists with and without disability as well as successful exhibitions. Lebenshilfe Salzburg is part of a network to promote access to the art scene in the "border region" with German Partners. It also participates in a national project developing an accessible art platform in the internet in German and English.

¹ EASPD is the European Association of Service Providers for persons with Disabilities

- **Stichting Culturele Raad Willemstad, Netherlands**

Stichting Culturele Raad Willemstad is a non-profit organisation that makes it possible to people with a physical or mental disability to perform art. The organisation is also organizing publicity on this subject and the result is an annual exhibition to which a great number of societies from the area are participating.

The organisation is working together with many professional artists and teachers, who are mostly cooperating on a voluntary basis. A cooperation program with professional artists and art specialist is developed, through which, people with disabilities have the opportunity to work together with (professional) artists in developing art.

- **Association Scuola Viva onlus, Italy**

The Association Scuola Viva onlus is a non-profit organization that was established in January 1995, to promote legally an initiative developed to provide a cohesive and innovative form of rehabilitation to young people with intellectual disabilities.

Scuola Viva encompasses two departments: a semi residential department for people with mental disability and out-patient ambulatories for people with speech and/or physical disabilities. Scuola Viva is a research, training and documentation centre in the field of intellectual disabilities. It is a referral point for cultural and professional training of staff who get prepared to apply the latest methods of teaching and rehabilitation, focusing on personal development and social integration of users. Scuola Viva created a vegetable garden and a flower garden in its property, as well as an art workshop. Painting became one of the most well known users' art activities of the centre. Many wall-paintings are spread all over Rome.

- **EIT Tugiliisu, Estonia**

The Support Association for People with Special Needs "Tugiliisu" aims at protecting the interests of people with special needs, especially people with intellectual disabilities, and, via its activities, at facilitating the creation of equal possibilities for these people in the society, and to increase their independence. EIT Tugiliisu employs 55 staff and several volunteers. It is member of the Estonian Mentally Disabled People Support Organization (EVPIT). Through EVPIT, it is also member of Inclusion Europe, EASPD and Independent Living Organization.

EIT Tugiliisu intends to develop new services and pilot projects for people with mental disabilities. They lead and provide easy to read projects (at voluntary bases) in Estonia with its self- advocates group. They organize yearly national summer camps for 100 people with mental disability. EIT has a centre that provides services to 70 people with mental disabilities and runs weekly art circles for 20 of them, linking with museums and cultural places around.

Practice of Art for People with Intellectual Disability

Since years, the access to art for people with intellectual disability has evolved a lot. Art brut enabled to recognize the possibility of the simple existence of artistic talent for people with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities. Nevertheless, the talent of artists with intellectual disabilities tended to be recognized and valued conditionally to the existence of disability, and assimilated to a precise style of art.

Therefore, during many decades, artists with intellectual disability have been stigmatized into the reductive concept of Brut Art, where the artists were considered as "virgins" of any cultural or artistic culture. This reveals as well the existence of prejudice according to which someone with intellectual disability would not be able to learn and to receive art education. Therefore, there was no reason why to develop art education workshops.

In parallel, the power of art therapy on the health of patients with mental or psychiatric disability has made his way in the medico-social sector. Art therapy, sometimes called creative arts therapy or expressive arts therapy, encourages people to express themselves and to understand emotions through art activities, which are seen as a tool and not as an end. The quality of the art work produced was not relevant and the producer kept to be seen as a patient and not as an artist.

Both art therapy and art education give the opportunity for the user to express himself through art. Yet, Art education for People With Disability is not Art therapy. The goals of these two items are fundamentally different. While the art therapy workshop considers the beneficiary as a patient, the art education workshop considers him as an artist. The creation process and the quality of the artwork is an end per se in the art education workshop, while the creation process is only a tool in art therapy. The quality of the artwork is not the objective, there is no teaching on techniques. Yet the well being of the user is not absent from the art education, as expressing himself/herself is at the very essence of art.

This distinction has framed this project and the compendium of good practices presented here are all from the art education workshops.

Nowadays, more and more bridges between the art sector and the medico-social sector are being built. In many countries of Europe, initiatives are raising to make art education accessible to people with intellectual disability and to benefit from equality of chance, not only to express themselves through art but as well to learn how to make art and to evolve as an artist.

During the visits of the Study Visits projects, the 5 partners have been introduced to several innovative practices in the field of art education for PWID. It came rapidly to the partners that many of these practices could be inspiring for other providers of social services and art education facilities and might be considered as best practices.

Main challenges existing in the field of Art Practice for People With Intellectual Disability

There is a set of challenges that prevent people with disability to have access to art education.

- ☒ Physical and intellectual barriers challenging the process of learning and preventing autonomous engagement into art education and art practice opportunities as they are designed now.
- ☒ Underestimation of the ability of people with intellectual disability to create, to learn and to practice high level of art.
- ☒ Lack of accessibility and of adaptation of the existing art and cultural offer to compensate the existing barriers.
- ☒ Isolation between cultural field and medico-social field which could be a bridge between people with intellectual disability who are users of medico-social services and existing art and culture general offer.
- ☒ Stigmatization of artists with intellectual disability and lack of recognition of their talent per se and not as the talent of someone with intellectual disability.

From best practices to good practices in Art Practice for People with Intellectual Disability

“A best practice is simply a process or a methodology that represents the most effective way of achieving a specific objective.”²

The specific objective that is looked for here is to give the opportunity to people with intellectual disability to access education to art and practice of art.

Some people prefer to use the term ‘good practice’ as in reality it is debatable whether there is a single ‘best’ approach – and of course approaches are constantly evolving and being updated. So another way of defining a good practice is one that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. ... The essence of identifying and sharing good practices is to learn from others and to re-use knowledge. The biggest benefit consists in well developed processes based on accumulated experience.”

Following the study visits, the partners have highlighted 5 good practices that enable to address some of these issues and that can be considered as inspiring practices. Most of the good practices presented below enable to address several of the above listed challenges.

Digital art workshop	Art Buddies	Outdoor art workshop	Inclusive art workshop	Real value of art production
France	Netherlands	Estonia	Austria	Italy



² Identifying and Sharing Good Practices, SDC Knowledge Management Toolkit (2004)

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When new technologies meet art ...



Good practice 1: Digital art workshop, France

At the Couleurs et Creation workshop, partners have discovered a workshop developed on **digital art**.

Context

This art workshop is particularly targeting ageing people with intellectual disability. This target group is subject to high fatigability that prevents them from continuing working or working full time.

Couleurs et Création is a day care center where users come every day, to attend work shop that are exclusively related to arts (may it be writing, dancing, painting, etc.).

At Couleurs et Création, it is considered that new media are particularly adapted to ageing People with intellectual disability.

These media enable them to accede to a technical level requesting a dexterity that

they would not have been able to acquire otherwise.

The digital art workshop has been developed by an artist Graduated from the School of Fine arts of Paris and it integrates computer design softwares and 3D in the process of art creation.

Implementation

The digital art workshop takes place over a weeklong timeframe. Participants enrol into the workshop on a voluntary basis and usually compose a group of 15 people. This art workshop is characterized by a constant come and go between manual practices and digital practices.

In the first day, the art facilitator proposes to the assembly (around 15 people seated in round) a set of images he collected and gathered into a virtual « Material Library ».

Through discussion among the circle and between the participants, a theme starts to come up, around which the group will work all along the week.

The group start then working individually on hand made visual art work (picturing and scanning).

When the first draft is finalized, the art facilitator scans it and computer modelling and graphics work can start. Following the guidance of the user, the art facilitator starts including 3 dimensions modelling.

The result of this phase is printed in large scales and the person can work again on this transformed product, either on the computer, either with the hand.

Visual and digital work continues until the person is satisfied of the results.

After two years of implementation with the

same group of users, they have developed their artistic skills and developed their own universe. They are more and more confident all along the process of creation.

The workshop is implemented in a day care center, very close to the need of the users and at the same time, very open to the exterior. On a frequent base, outings are organized to attend cultural events such as exhibitions, museums, play, etc. This enables the users to have access to the existing cultural offer, to be fed and inspired by what exists outside and to be included in the society by meeting different people (school groups, retired groups, etc.) from the public and from the professional artists.

Benefits

The philosophy behind the development of the digital art workshop is giving access to innovation. In order not to limit the artist with intellectual or psychiatric disability to a certain kind of artistic production that could be previously attributed to them, it is considered as essential to

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provide technical skills and innovative medium to express themselves.

Bringing together art and new media is definitely a way to renew artistic production. By new media, we mean works using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in their realisation process and in their creation support (video, IT, etc.)

Another added value of this workshop is that it has been developed and it is being implemented by a professional artist.

This reinforces the principle according to which art education for people with disability and art therapy are fundamentally different.

As stated in the introduction, art education has been reduced during a very long time to art-therapy only. In Art mediation, art is an end per se and not a tool. Art education for People with intellectual Disability should be facilitated by professional artists and should not be a "second zone" art education.

Strengths :

- ☑ **Delivered by a professional artist**
- ☑ **Give access to innovative tools and techniques**
- ☑ **Frequency of the workshop enabling real progression and acquisition of artistic skills.**



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Digital art workshop	Art Buddies	Outdoor art workshop	Inclusive art workshop	Real value of art production
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Practicing art in a professional art workshop



Good practice 2: Art buddies, Netherlands

During the visit in Willemstad, the partners discovered the **Art Buddies**.

Art Buddies is a program where professional artists (or amateur artists) are linked with people with a disability who are interested in art or are performing art.

Implementation

The basic idea is that an artist with a disability can participate in the atelier of the professional artists and that they are making art together or art can be made with help and support from the professional (amateur) artist.

In general the relation is a one to one relation : one professional artist and one artist with a disability. They can meet/practice together once a week. More days, depending on their interests and possibilities can be decided by themselves or

with a disability has an

with agreement from a care organisation.

Art Buddies has its background in the Best Buddies program. This is a general friendship program for persons with a disability and non disabled persons. See www.bestbuddies.org

Another possibility is that a professional artist is working with more than 1 artist with a disability (e.g. 5 persons get support in the atelier of the professional artist). This form is now growing in the Netherlands.

The activities in the atelier of the professional artist are similar to activities in the ateliers of care organisations.

Programs are individual and based on possibilities and progress of the individual. Decision about programming are made by the professional

Benefits

artist and the person with a disability involved. They develop together.

The Art Buddies is still a small program, but shall grow next years due to changing in the financial arrangement related to day activities for persons with disability and to the on-going desinstitutionalisation.

Instead of ateliers from care organisations, especially in smaller towns, facilities from professional artists could be used to make it possible that persons with a disability can perform art as part of his/her day activities.

Target Group

Beneficiaries are persons with a disability. In principle this can be each individual with a disability who is interested in art. Participation is voluntary. It might be possible that the activities are part of day activities. When a person Practicing art for people with

indication for day care and he/ she likes to participate he/ she can make appointments with a professional artist. They might get help from family or from a care organisation. When an indication is involved there is also money available from day care, which can be paid to the professional artists. This depends on the individual situation. In that case there is an agreement between the professional artist and the care organisation.

Another option is through individual budget of the client himself. In this situation appointments are made between the client (artist with a disability) and the professional artist.

Professional artist can as well do this as a volunteer. This can also be done by amateurs who are performing art.

Contacts are made locally, in the town or region where the professional artist and the person with a disability both live/work.

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The primary benefit of this practice is that people with disability who are interested in performing art can do this in their own integrated environment/ community. There is no need to go to a segregated facility for day care. In practice both persons involved learn from each other. There is a mutual influence based on information we received till so far. Both are exploring possibilities and are discovering.

The preferences of the artist with a disability have impact for the professional artist : trespassing barriers, gaining new experiences, gaining new insights.

intellectual disability sometimes implies barrier that prevent them from practicing their own art by themselves.

In that case, the support of an external facilitator can be required. This facilitator can be a tool, as the use of digital art for example, but it also can be a person, as the buddies art.

Strengths :

☑ **Overcome disability through human facilitator**

☑ **Encourage social inclusion**



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Art at Museum



Good practice 3: Workshop at the museum, Estonia

During the stay in Tallinn, the partners visited the Art Museum of Estonia KUMU, where EIT Tugiliisu had arranged for an **art educational program at museum** for their users.

Context and implementation

The methodology for art creation in EIT Tugiliisu is a little different than it usually is. The organisation main goal is to support people with disability to live in an open society and to take part in different kind of activities together with other people.

The main goal is inclusion, and not to provide special workshops. The staff and users of the organisation are often going out from the building and use a lot of programs available in

different institutions and museums.

The program is established on a collaborative way, where both staff and users are involved in the choice of the programming.

Programming is made for a month, and activities are taking place once a week.

Then, the facilitators from EIT are not only making the link between the users willing to enrol in art production and the art and cultural facilities. But they are accompanying the users on the place and staying during the sessions as well.

The "discovering session" is not always taking place in museums, sometimes externalization is meeting with nature.

After the session, the users

can come back to the center and produce according to what they have learnt, felt and been influenced by outdoors.

When possible, EIT intends to implement the art production workshop in the museum premises as well.

When this is not possible, the center make accessible for the users simple materials and tools so that they can work on their art production there.

Benefits

In many countries, care sector and cultural sector are separated sectors with a lack of communication and bridges between the two.

On the one hand, artistic and cultural structures remain insufficiently trained on mental disability. Therefore

the support and workshops organized in these cultural are often not adapted or accessible to people with intellectual disability.

On the other hand, art and culture in care structures are often used only as occupational activities rather than mediation holding meaning. The opportunity to develop one's talent and to enter more deeply into art practices and cultural knowledge are rarely given to the users of care centers.

For the users, going out from the center, discovering other places and meeting other people are ways of being included in the society, while benefiting from the external expertise of the art and culture professionals.

This is a two way learning. The users with intellectual disability benefit from access to culture and to art education while staff of the museum are being sensitized

on how to make their artistic and cultural offer adapted to public with intellectual disability. The staff from the museum are witnessing the actual challenges and barriers someone with intellectual disability might face when going to their premises. They are able to adapt accordingly the way the information is presented, the pathway.

This practice is a good practice that could inspire the activity of service provider organizations for people with intellectual disability who do not have a lot of financial resource.

Indeed this method practice relies on the resources available outside. This is at the same time a strategy to promote inclusion and a strategy to use external resources.

Strengths :

☑ **Create social link**

☑ **Sensitize museums on accessibility to people with intellectual disability**



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Inclusive art workshop

Good practice 4: Creating together, inclusive art workshop, Austria

In Salzburg, partners have visited the Gallery pro Arte Hallein that exhibited the productions of an **inclusive art workshop**.

Context

In Hallein, in the surroundings of Salzburg, the partners visited the Galerie Kunstraum pro Arte to see the exhibition "Auszeit". Nine artists showed their drawings resulting from the project "Werfener Zeichentage", which had taken place in spring 2013 in Werfen, a small village in the south of Salzburg.

The group of artists participating to this project was composed by four artists with intellectual or mental disability and five artists without.

Implementation

This project was born from the initiative of a professional artist, Erich Gruber, who cooperated with Lebenshilfe Salzburg in

organising the inclusive workshop. Erich Gruber had had contact with artists (with disability) from Salzburg and Vienna, whose work he appreciated very much and with whom he wanted to exchange in a working-process.

Among these admired artists were the Lebenshilfe artist Gerhard Maurer, and Leonhard Besl, an academic artist with disability. Two other artists with mental disability also joined the group. They met in an old culture-club in Werfen and worked together for four days.

In the rooms of the club they had enough space to work together intensively and to withdraw to separate areas if they wanted to work apart from the group.

For Erich Gruber, at the origin of the project, the most important aim of this inclusive workshop was to meet each other at eye-level.

After this inclusive art workshop, the production of the artists were exposed in a local regular art gallery.

The exhibition had a lot of publicity in Hallein and its surroundings

Benefits

The workshop and the exhibition are best-practice examples of real inclusive artistic projects.

The nine artists participating in this project were selected based on their talents.

This was a good practice considering the artist with some kind of disability as a full artist, on equal feet with artists with no disability.

The results of these days were shown in the gallery in Hallein. In the gallery, there were no distinctive signs that would indicate that some of the art productions were produced by artist with or without intellectual disability.

The labels of the pictures at the exhibition only showed the names of the artists.

Prospective buyers had to ask for the prices. The differences in pricing did not result from the existence or absence of disability although some artists had contracts with galleries in their regions.

The way of exhibiting the work of artist and the publicity and success that the exhibition had in the area were a good way of recognition of their talent for the artist with disability involved.

It is important to remind that it was an artist, independent from the care organization, who has been at the initiative of this project.

This is a good example of how the art sector can be, by itself more inclusive,

without betraying their research for art quality. This can be an inspiring practice for any artist.

Service providers structures can nevertheless help as well to promote this kind of exchange by offering residence to an artist for long period.

Strengths :

- ☑ **Enables inclusion**
- ☑ **Involves professional artist**
- ☑ **Recognition of the artistic talent with no stigmatization**



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Recognizing the value of the art productions



Good practice 5: Exhibition of the work of artists with intellectual disability in regular gallery, Italy

In Italy, a gallery was visited exhibiting the art work of people with intellectual disability, **recognizing the value of the art production of the artists.** Yet it was not a specialized gallery but a regular art gallery.

Target group

The users of the art atelier are young people with intellectual disability and/or added mental problems, whose average ages are around 25 to 30 years. Art activities are carried out as a rule depending on the individual capacities of each user.

The exhibition visited during the study visit, in an open environment, reflects the systematic valorisation and externalization of art production that are at work in the art workshop of the Scuola Viva Onlus association. Users are often invited to participate to art

exhibitions, both at local and national level.

Implementation

One of the central art workshop of the association consists in collective mural paintings.

These mural paintings are ordered by outside clients and can appear in school playground, offices, etc. Everyone at the center has access to art education workshop. Nevertheless, when work are ordered by outside client, it sometimes require that the art facilitator select among the voluntary users, the one that are managing the best the techniques that are requested in the order.

The users of the art atelier became very familiar with the several art instruments and tools, while developing a very high capacity on art work. Nowadays they are

able to set up masterpieces that can be shown in exhibition. Hopefully soon it will also be possible to market their works.

This capacity has been a highlight for their self-esteem and increased the feeling of their own independence. Working on a collective picture skilled the relationship with the peers, qualified their "social borders" as any other person, taught the respects of their rights and obligations.

Benefit

The externalization of the art productions prevent them from being bordered in the facility were they are produced.

On the contrary, it enables to hold with the art productions the recognition of the talent of the artist outside the facility.

The artwork is exposed to

the appreciation of a large public.

The art work is submitted to the critical judgement in a gallery, regardless of the identity of the artist.

Again, the aim is a valorisation of the work of artists with intellectual disability as the one of any other artist, therefore in a common gallery.

Outside exhibitions enables the inclusion of the artist with disability into the society, as an actor, and not just as a spectator or consumer.

Exhibiting in public places touching a large number of people is a practice that has to be retaken by any art practices places, especially those attended by people with disability who suffer the most from lack of recognition of their skills.

Strengths :

☑ **Recognition of the artistic talent with no stigmatization**

☑ **Inclusion as an active participant in the society**



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Recommandations from the highlighted five good practices

- ✓ Involve as much as possible professional artists to be the facilitators of the art education workshop.
- ✓ Facilitate access to a rich and diverse environment to stimulate imagination and to facilitate access to cultural and artistic knowledge
- ✓ Give access to innovative tools and techniques
- ✓ Find ways to overcome barriers that prevent to practice art such as calling upon human facilitators (art buddies) or material facilitators (new technologies)
- ✓ Promote inclusion through inclusive workshop or by ensuring outside link in specialized workshop.
- ✓ Facilitate social link
- ✓ Involving museums as much as possible to benefit from their expertise and to sensitize them on accessibility to people with intellectual disability
- ✓ Exhibiting the art works in various and diverse places to enable recognition of the artistic talent with no stigmatization.

