

# URB RT

**SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
THROUGH URBAN ARTS EDUCATION**

Austrian Survey on transdisciplinary and multilingual Urban Arts Education  
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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Project Introduction

This report takes place in the context of the Erasmus+ project URB\_ART – SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH URBAN ARTS EDUCATION.

This project aims to support low-skilled adults in marginalised communities through activities and concepts of Urban Arts Education. Social inclusion and empowerment of this target group are the focus of the project activities and results.

Urban Arts Education is defined from the conceptual triangle of arts education, urban adult education and urban arts. Thus, it encompasses the creative development of the individual as well as the understanding of regional and international art and culture in large, densely populated urban areas with a diverse population. Dealing with art in the community of low qualified adults from marginalised groups overcomes socio-cultural barriers and provides access to new social groups. Here, transdisciplinary art offers function as communication instruments for intercultural dialogue and social integration. This project is being conducted with partner organisations from the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Iceland, and Portugal.

This is the Austrian report of the transnational survey of URB\_ART that was prepared by EDUCULT and only illustrates the Austrian results of the Baseline Survey on transdisciplinary and multilingual Urban Arts Education. EDUCULT is an institution based in Vienna which focuses on conducting research and organizing events in the spheres of arts, culture, and education.

URB\_ART realizes five project activities that build on each other:

IO1: The "Baseline Survey on transdisciplinary and multilingual Urban Arts Education" will formulate national and transnational needs and challenges with regard to marginalisation in the fields of culture and education as well as success indicators with regard to Urban Arts Education, taking into account concepts of transdisciplinarity, metro- and multilingualism. The following sections of this paper were produced as a part of this survey report.

IO2: The "Compendium of storytelling resources through Urban Arts Education" aims to list success stories for transdisciplinary and multilingual Urban Arts Education based on the baseline survey. In this way, this compendium will create specific knowledge about the resources of storytelling through urban arts and empower cultural and educational actors.

IO3: The "In-Service training package on Urban Arts Education" offers opportunities for further education for adult education providers and community actors. The results generated from IO1 and IO2 are conveyed in a practice-oriented manner in training courses in all five partner countries, whereby the results and recommendations can be directly integrated into the thinking and actions of those involved in practice.

IO4: The "Toolkit of video case studies on Community Urban Arts" aims to present media-based successful transnational practices for the inclusion of marginalised communities in urban arts programs and initiatives.

IO5: The "Policy Paper" deals with the potentials of transdisciplinary Urban Arts Education with regard to social inclusion. Based on the analysis of the results of the transnational project, the aim is to develop operational and policy recommendations for decision makers and policy makers in the field of culture, education and social affairs.

The main goal of the project is to support those working in the field of Urban Arts Education, and through that support increase how inclusive the field is. By creating an understanding of the factors of exclusion and marginalisation in Urban Arts Education, URB\_ART aims to empower artists, social workers, and educators to overcome these factors, and reach more people. For example, the training package will build on these survey results and create materials which help educators and related professionals transcend barriers and include people with less resources and opportunities in their work. The project sees creating social inclusion and cohesion as one of the purposes of art education, and the results created intend to support that purpose.

## 1.2 Survey Introduction

The Austrian Baseline Survey on transdisciplinary and multilingual Urban Arts Education was conducted from May 28<sup>th</sup> to August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. The aim of the Austrian survey was to figure out main factors of marginalisation in the fields of culture and education, main barriers to access in community arts in urban areas, linguistic characteristics and conditions in urban activities to promote social inclusion and the main success factors for promoting social inclusion through Urban Arts Education. The target groups were associated adult and community educators, social workers, professionals in the artistic and cultural field (TG1) and independent art educators and artists of different art disciplines (TG3) living in Austrian urban areas. Low-skilled adults in Austrian marginalised communities (TG2) were addressed indirectly through including their perspectives.

In terms of geographic distribution, being Austria's major urban centre—over 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the Austrian population resides there—and due to its historical emphasis on the arts and cultural sector, it was inevitable that about half of survey and interview participants would be from Vienna. However, respondents came from all over Austria. The interviews and focus groups focused on the largest urban areas such as Graz, Innsbruck, Salzburg, and Linz. This gave the research more perspectives on topics such as funding, target audiences, barriers to participation, etc. Among the online survey respondents a few were even from smaller cities.

This project also provided new insights into the composition of the Urban Arts Education field in Austria and led us to reconsider what arts education is. The work of the interviewees ranged from classical arts education (leading artistic workshops, teaching musical skills) to broader activities (advising on art school portfolios, collective construction of a parklet). We included these latter interviews because they lie at the intersection of art, education, and urban space, and symbolize a broader approach to the field of Urban Arts Education and, to some extent, reflects the diversity and heterogeneity of urban cultural phenomena.

The quantitative survey evaluation, interview summaries, and focus group summary will be followed by a conclusion highlighting the common threads identified through this research.

# 2. Assessment of the Austrian Online Survey

## 2.1 Aims and Methods of the Survey

The standardized online questionnaire which was designed by ZRC SAZU was translated from English to German on the platform IKA and disseminated through targeting via social media, mailing lists and newsletter promotion to TG1 and TG3 living and working in Austria.

## 2.2 Survey Participants

In total 37 participants from Austria took part in the online survey. About half live in Vienna, 8% each in Graz and Salzburg and just under a third are spread out over other Austrian regions. 11% answered that their place of birth was Vienna, 56% were born in other Austrian cities and 33% in different European countries. This shows that many of the interviewees have changed their city or country of residence, with migration patterns especially focused towards Vienna, as about half of respondents lived there although only 11% were born there. This underlines the importance of the city as a place of cultural creation for TG1 and TG3 as well.

36% of people are currently employed in the NGO sector, 32% are freelancers, 8% each work in the education sector, in the public sector or in the business sector and the other 27% mainly as artists or in associations in the fields of arts and culture. 74% are permanent employed and 26% have no permanent employment. Over half (57%) of respondents said they had formal training/degrees in the arts. 47% each categorised their profession as art educator or artist whereas 8% identified as social workers. Among the other 44%, respondents identified themselves as working in positions including trainers, cultural managers, researchers and architects. Theatre (54%), music (51%) and dance (40%) are the respondents' main artistic disciplines. Several forms of employment were taken into account here, so the survey allowed for multiple responses.

Out of 17, 59% reported implementing art education projects more than 12 times a year, whereas 12% implemented 9-12 times and 29% implemented 2-9 times. Due to the low response rate, it can be assumed that many of the non-respondents do not engage in art education activities. Of the activities, 71% are financed by community funds, 59% by government funds, 24% by participation fees and 18% each by own capital and EU funds. 82% believe that their activities contribute to community education. In an open question the participants answered that their work contributes to the community through intercultural exchange, co-creation, networking, education, low-threshold, (non-verbal) communication/interaction through art interventions, local and collaborative cultural work, opening up and get to know life worlds.

## 2.3 Linguistic Characteristics

86% of 37 participants said that German, which is the official language in Austria, is their mother tongue. 11% understand it very well and 3% stated that they understand it. 70% comprehend 2-3 other languages besides German, whereas 13% understand 0-1 and 16% understand 4-5 other languages. It can be concluded from this that multilingualism or linguistic competence is prevalent and important among the participants. This is also reflected by the fact that 81% said they speak the

language of the neighbourhood they live/work in, whereas 19% do not. However, it is interesting to note that 97% of the respondents stated that they spoke German as their mother tongue or very well. This again shows that German is not necessarily the dominant language in every neighbourhood/region of Austria. In addition to German as the dominant language, 31% of 29 people who answered this question stated that English is a spoken language in urban areas, and 6% each answered Arabic and Turkish. Half of the respondents affirmed the statement that there is a particular metro-language spoken in the city whereas other half answered the question with “no” or “don't know”.

## 2.4 Urban Marginalisation

Out of a total of 29 people, almost 80% each answered that low language skills, low income and low level of education are the main factors for marginalisation. 66% consider social exclusion a barrier, 45% race and ethnicity. Only 14% each stated that disabilities, gender or sexual orientation are the main factors. 97% said that there exists access to community arts activities in their city for people with fewer opportunities but 100% answered that this group doesn't know about the participation opportunities. 60% chose linguistic challenges, 53% cultural differences, 47% financial obstacles, about 40% each educational differences and segregation, 27% social obstacles whereas only 10% unattractive opportunities as main barriers for access to community arts. Multiple answers were possible here.

This shows that it is perceived by TG1 and TG3 that it is not the quality and number of offers, but rather the lack of knowledge about them that creates cultural exclusion in Austrian cities. 23% believe that social inequalities become less visible in the arts education process, 43% answered that their activities affect social inequalities “moderately” whereas 23% “slightly” and 10% “not at all”. Reasons reduced visibility of differences can be that there is a “same starting point” in activities, the shared experiences during the process, and because art and culture can function as a connecting and non-verbal, sensuous and intuitive form of communication.

## 2.5 Success factors and challenges for Urban Arts Education

Out of a total of 29 participants, the main factors identified as helping promote social inclusion through Urban Arts Education are sufficient funds (79%), specific targeting (66%), social community work (62%), word of mouth (59%), clear communication (55%), promotion of urban arts opportunities (52%), attractive mediation offer (48%) and enthusiastic organisers (41%). Nearly 70% each indicated that increased project funding and financial stimulation of participants could increase the social inclusion capacity of Urban Arts Education. More tailored, attractive and low-threshold offers were mentioned as additional success factors and opportunities for improvement. 53% said that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed access to urban cultural offers, 30% answered “no”. Of the 53%, limited/no offers, fewer opportunities for interaction and a shift to the digital space were seen as the main factors for this change. This was answered in an open question.

76% of the participants already have experience with artistic collaborations that addressed people from marginalised communities. Of these 76%, 76% believe that their activities have promoted the social inclusion of TG2. 82% even stated social inclusion as the goal of their collaborative activities, 41% had entertainment, 36% gaining more competences and 27% self-promotion as objectives. In an open answer option, enabling cultural participation was mentioned as a further goal. These data show that social inclusion and participation are highly valued by the respondents, but funding (56%), time availability of participants (50%) and communication problems (44%) are the main obstacles to success. Likewise, with 76% each, the target groups' insecurities, feeling misunderstood and not being addressed were declared as the biggest problems in inclusive work. With 100%

satisfaction with the interest of the participants, this is clearly not a barrier. In contrast, 59% said that language was a barrier whereas 24% said it wasn't. Out of a total of 29 participants, 90% believe that artistic endeavours make communication easier. Creative/artistic and non-verbal forms of expression and creating together allow for communication beyond language. The most important non-verbal forms of communication chosen were artistic expression at 85%, gestures at 74% and facial expressions at 70%. As open suggestions for more linguistically inclusive practices in the field of Urban Arts Education, the respondents mentioned addressing participants in the mother tongue/languages of the neighbourhood or multilingual offers, the use of simple language, the development of non-verbal formats or artistic forms of expression and public interventions.

This quantitative study in the Austrian region was not able to generate insights into which forms of metrolingualism occur in larger cities and what significance they have. Also surprising was the statement that TG2 has access to community arts, but cannot use them for certain reasons. Therefore, according to this study, it is not a lack of offer, but rather lack of information/knowledge and communication problems that are the cause.



# 3. Qualitative Survey

## 3.1 Focus Group

The focus group was conducted online via Zoom on July 6<sup>th</sup> 2021 with artists and art educators from urban areas across Austria. These included 1) the director of a poetry slam organisation in Linz, which focuses on workshops for students, the general public, and teachers; 2) an employee of a community arts organisation in Vienna, at the intersection of arts, culture, and politics, which both plans art and culture events, and advises other institutions on promoting diversity; 3) an artist in Graz, who migrated to the city from Ukraine 10 years ago, whose focus is on sound design and composition, workshops, and art installations in public spaces; and 4) an artist, psychologist, and sports scientist in Innsbruck with an atelier, who hosts school workshops, does portrait photography, and takes a holistic approach to human expression. The focus group revealed that the poetry slam organisation and the artist in Innsbruck focus predominantly, though not exclusively, on a teenage/young adult target group. Other target groups mentioned by participants included the general public (through public installations and events), people with migration or refugee backgrounds, and people living in decentral areas of cities. Particularly with exhibits or performances in public spaces, there was a consensus that you can attract people who happen to be walking by, who might not otherwise engage with arts and culture. It was also noted by the artist from Graz to be the most democratic form of art presentation and education, while the participant from Vienna felt it was also a good way to tackle themes and topics neglected in the mainstream/elite art world. Hosting such events is also important in decentral areas, as they have less access to art and cultural institutions.

Another central topic in the focus group was factors of marginalisation and exclusion in Urban Arts Education. Those mentioned were varied—language, migration background, skin colour, gender, and economic status, among others. Two of the participants discussed their efforts to reach these groups specifically. Factors important for this were noted to be cooperation with other organisations that work with these target groups, having people in your organisation’s team that reflect these experiences, needing long term projects to really engage these groups, and generally rethinking things like themes of projects, who is performing, location, etc. The participants from Linz and Graz said they felt there are many organisations in their cities which do well reaching out to marginalised groups. In order to address the barrier of economic status, organisers often use a no or low-cost /low-threshold strategy. However, it was noted that with limited funding from public and private institutions, entry costs are an important source of financing for the artist’s or organisation’s activities—the participants from Linz and Innsbruck noted that they cannot afford to completely get rid of fees. The artist from Graz said he felt financially supported by the city, and the participant from Linz noted that his organisation recently had its funding increased. The artist from Innsbruck mentioned still seeking out funders for her art projects, she largely supports herself through her psychology work.

On the topic of language, two artists discussed the ability of arts to overcome language barriers—one discussed a project he worked on where artists from different countries had to design an exhibit together without using a shared language, instead communicating through body language and art, and the other talked about art as a form of expression or communication which builds connection beyond language. The multilingual approach is an important way to reach people who are often excluded on a linguistic basis—even advertising events in different languages helps to reach new audiences. However, some participants lacked the resources to do this. Another aspect of language mentioned was dialect—speakers must navigate the fact that dialect is often looked down upon or not as clearly understood, while also being seen by fellow speakers as more authentic and legitimate. Dialect can thus open doors while often serving as a factor of exclusion as well.

## 3.2 Interviews

**Interview 1** was conducted online via Zoom on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2021 with an artist who founded an art collective focused on experimentation with audio-visual arts and arts education, and who has participated in an urban arts festival. He lives and works in Graz and often runs workshops in various contexts, including at universities, at festivals, with people battling addiction, and in open spaces. When planning workshops, his focus is on understanding the level of knowledge of the target audience and creating a low barrier to entry for arts education. This is shown by one of his projects, in which he adapted a baby stroller to function as a sound mixing station. He takes this installation into public places and interacts with the people there, teaching them how to use the technology and jamming with them. Often, people in these parks speak very little German, and the artist noted: *“Mixing music has functioned really well as a nonverbal mode of communication [...] Then you have shared emotions, and through this communication you notice right away—he’s responding to my audio output—it leads to communication and joy, and a certain intimacy. And they’ll learn something about audio synthesis for the first time [...] without really knowing it.”* He also noted that going to public places or to places and organisations where marginalised people gather, is the best way to reach such groups. Generally, he felt the art scene in Graz can be a bit homogenous and academic. According to the interviewee, the art scene in urban areas is unique because in urban spaces people with different social backgrounds and origins and beliefs must interact—it’s a place where social conflicts play out. Because of this, he also feels that urban arts education plays a special role: tackling and processing these conflicts. When people work collectively and creatively, it gives them a shared basis for conversation: *“When a workshop takes place, the workshop is one thing, but the exchange afterwards, or before, or during, is actually the foundational element that I find important. When people talk and discuss, and exchange values.”* Challenges the artist faces sees and experiences in Graz are language barriers (despite nonverbal communication working for some projects, for others language plays a bigger role), urban regulations relating to sound, and motivating people to return to events.

**Interview 2** was conducted online via Zoom on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021 with an artist and activist in Linz. She is the head of an organisation which is heavily focused on advising artists who are women, trans-, or intersex, as well as conducting workshops for artists. In their advising work, those at the organisation work with artists who face exclusion on various fronts: those trying to get back into the arts industry after an extended break due to childcare, those applying for arts university, those who just graduated and are looking for work, and migrants who need visas to stay in Austria, among others. These sessions are also cost free, to enable access for all. Advising people applying to universities includes evaluating their portfolios and suggesting changes they could make. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and both advising sessions and workshops moved online, demand from various regions of Austria and Germany have grown massively. Digital possibilities have opened up their work and lowered barriers so much that the organisation plans to stick with the format, even as COVID-19 restrictions relax. The career advising also includes connecting women with potential galleries, venues, publishers, and more—their website also includes a data bank with funding calls, available to all online. Advising/education is offered in multiple languages, and the organisation has cooperated with other organisations that centre on groups such as migrants, the homeless, or queer people, in order to reach those target audiences. However, reaching these groups is limited by lack of resources and time. Funding is also increasingly limited and project focused, so the organisation has to devote more time to seeking funding for and carrying out projects.

**Interview 3** was conducted face-to-face on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021 with an architect who works in a community building organisation focused on social integration. She is originally from Syria but has been living in Vienna for about 4,5 years. The organisation runs various projects including the building of a parklet, an intercultural university mentorship program, and more. The interviewee’s focus was on the parklets, which she architecturally designed. Then, with volunteers spanning various ethnic

groups, origins, religions and socio-economic statuses, all but one of whom had no experience with building or architecture, they built a mini park. The interviewee discussed how through this process, the participants not only learned new skills and discovered interests they hadn't realized before, but that they were able to build friendships and understanding through their consistent and collective work. *"Of course, it can be better if people already have these skills, but in my experience it's nicer when people don't, and just come because they are interested. Because it's not about building a masterpiece, but just about creating a space where people meet, that brings people together."* As the organisation focuses on intercultural exchange, language plays a very central role. Among the languages used by the organisation most commonly are Arabic and German. Exchange truly is the organisation's emphasis. The interviewee explained that integration goes both ways, as immigrants both need to learn the local language and feel that local people are interested in and care about their culture. They often use a mix of languages, German with an Arabic phrase occasionally thrown in, and focus on building a comfortable environment where it's okay to make mistakes. Community building works primarily through the creation of spaces in neighborhoods that arouse interest in participation and co-creation.

**Interview 4** was conducted face-to-face on July 9<sup>th</sup> 2021 with the founder and a founding educator of an association which holds workshops with German learners, mainly in museums, combining language and arts education. They also offer trainings for teachers and conceptual work, e.g. for institutions. The founder is an art educator and German as a second language trainer. One of their focal points is multilingualism - the team speaks 16 different languages - though they also emphasize the approach of *"language through art"*. The target group consists mainly of adults learning German, but is very heterogeneous. People from marginalised communities are among the participants, but the organisation prefers not to focus on disadvantages and deficits, but rather on commonalities. Two elements central to their work are defining arts and culture together with participants, as well as the connection between arts and social issues. *"Everyone makes culture. We are cultural beings. But then there are also margins and priorities that a society sets. One culture gets more space than others. One culture is considered important, the other is considered deficient and needs to be changed, adapted."* As a result, the organisation sees *"many psychological barriers, which also have to do with power relations in society"*. They have observed that mixing different people in public space is much easier than in closed spaces, which makes being active in the neighbourhood a central point in their work. Funding presents many hurdles, which in their opinion are mainly related to two problems in the funding landscape: firstly, success depends heavily on personal contacts, and secondly, they are at the interface between culture and education - so it is often not entirely clear which funding area they fall into. The team therefore works on a project basis and is not fully employed. An important strategy is visibility, being active in different fields - that's the way to reach the desired diversity. They also try to keep developing. An important factor is support from bigger institutions.

**Interview 5** was conducted via Zoom on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 with an artist/art educator who founded a non-profit association with a partner in 2012, which trains people with cognitive disabilities to become DJs, and acts as an agent for bookings. In the first few years, they were only active in Vienna with funded courses, but since 2016 they have expanded to Lower Austria. Their bookings are all over Austria. The aim of the association is to break down prejudices against disabilities and to show that they are not an obstacle in the creative industry. Furthermore, it is about the exchange between people with and without disabilities. In this way, they want to contribute to a more inclusive world. The courses are mainly financed by grants. The money from privately booked courses and for performances also flows into the association and contributes to the financing of grant funded courses. The courses consist of a maximum of 10 interested individuals, reached mainly through the institutions for people with disabilities. A strong increase in self-esteem can be noticed among the participants, especially when they are then on stage. For some there is also a social aspect – they get out more. The project also has a great effect on the audience as barriers fall and new contacts are made between people with and without disabilities. Some participants also develop a lasting interest in

music. Within the groups there is a close cohesion and a strong awareness of (different) disabilities. Language does not play a role as such—there are also a few almost non-verbal participants who communicate with gestures or sounds. There are also people with other first languages, but the language of communication in their courses and work is German. Multilingualism manifests itself through other forms of communication. The trainers also avoid using certain jargon in order to make the courses easier to understand and more low-threshold. One challenge that they encounter is lack of visibility and funding possibilities. In this regard the lack of clarity on whether they are in the social or cultural sector is an issue. Visibility, however, is the most important success factor.

## 4. Conclusion and general results

Through analysis of the interviews, focus group, and online survey data, general results were identified, expressed by several of the people and institutions involved. Factors for marginalisation and exclusion mentioned were manifold—some respondents try specifically to reach people from these groups, others reach a general audience and thus sometimes include people from marginalised groups. The main factors for exclusion noted were language, economic status, migration experience, and lack of knowledge about offers, while gender and decentrality mentioned a lesser number of times. Overall, language was emphasized as a barrier to entry in the arts sector, with low income and low level of education also emphasised in the online survey. When people do not speak the dominant language feelings of insecurity and judgment are a huge barrier to overcome—this holds them back from participating in cultural and artistic events, or often even leads them to not know about the existence of such events. Unfortunately, most small organisations in the urban arts field say they lack the funding and staffing to offer all locally spoken languages, to advertise events in locally used languages, or even to reach out to groups excluded for other reasons. This was also reflected in the online survey, where respondents felt that to improve inclusiveness in Urban Arts Education necessitates more funding. Other important ways to tackle the economic barrier, respondents said they use low/no cost strategies for participants, while low-threshold activities reduce insecurities and difficulties of engaging with activities in the arts.

Arts have the potential to overcome or reduce language barriers, because art itself can be a form of nonverbal communication. Dance, music, and painting were mentioned as forms of expression that transcend language. Even when verbal language itself is not understood—creative and artistic expressions, gestures, facial expressions and body language are bridge builders and tools of communication. Several participants noted the importance of arts in urban public spaces and of being active in the neighbourhood. This engages people who might not normally take up cultural offers and thus reaches new audiences, creates interaction, and is democratic. Arts in non-public spaces can be cost prohibitive and intimidating, but arts in the open, particularly when it's interactive, can engage people's curiosity. Arts can also connect people with one another: shared work, creative expression, and performances can create inclusion and connection between people. Even when people come from different social backgrounds, a shared artistic project can help bring them together; such projects can also lead to the development of new skills, interests, and confidence. This is particularly important in the urban space, which is a place where people from many different social groups come together and must learn to communicate, integrate, and create shared values. Urban Arts Education can thus build a bridge between and within communities who are marginalised in a certain way/level or are not.

URB\_ART aims to support the field of Urban Arts Education. This part of the first project result, IO1, has generated an understanding of the challenges faced in the field of Urban Arts Education in Austria. With this understanding, particularly as it relates to which language barriers exist and success factors and problems in overcoming them, a first step has been taken to advance the branch of Urban Arts Education. The complete report, incorporating responses from all project partner countries (Austria, United Kingdom, Iceland, Slovenia, and Portugal), will give an even broader understanding of the state of Urban Arts Education in Europe, and show which shared challenges, but also which differing ones, exist in the field internationally. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, the next project step will be to take the best practices and success factors gathered from these surveys and to compile them into a compendium. This compendium will be released with the aim of creating and spreading knowledge of how educators, artists, and social workers can overcome the barriers

present in Urban Arts Education. In this way it is meant to support those working in the field and to reduce factors of exclusion that are present.

