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Methodology for the NiCeR Project

This document presents a proposal of how organisations could develop, with the support of professional artists and coaches, a performing arts training project whose aim is to bring together young refugees and local youth in European cities.

We would like to suggest a methodology that stimulates the engagement of refugee youth in the local life of the city where they live through the combination of language and musical training giving empowerment to the young people.

Ethos

In 2015, more than a million refugees arrived in Europe and just as many, if not more, are expected to come in 2016. They are fleeing war, terrorism, poverty, hunger, searching for safety and a better life.

Most of them are young, or come with children of schooling age. All over Europe, they are accommodated in refugee shelters, reception facilities or in makeshift camps, where the opportunities for interaction and exchange with locals are very limited, and very often language and cultural barriers can be a major obstacle. On the other hand, the local population has little understanding of who the refugees actually are and where they come from. Currently, a growing number of Europeans perceives this situation as a crisis, which has been giving rise to fear, right-wing populism, xenophobia and a generalised anti-immigration sentiment.

This situation creates the need to identify and implement innovative instruments to counterbalance this prejudice.

We believe that it is especially important for refugee minors and young adults to become active participants in the local life of their new homes and to make contact as well as build lasting connections with local youth. As a matter of fact, not only are they adjusting to life in a new country and recovering from trauma, but they are also dealing with these experiences at a critical stage of their lives, that of transition to adulthood.

In this sense, giving them the opportunity to get to know the local culture and language and establish connections and friendships between refugees and locals are important steps towards refugee empowerment, so that they can achieve a sense of belonging in society.

Challenging the Terminology

The following methodology would also like to call into question the use of the term *integration*, which has become a controversial concept with different meanings and interpretations.

In European policy documents, for example, integration is seen as a two-way process, in which newcomers and natives have to adapt to each other.

However, in some European countries this term is often used in the political and institutional discourse as well as in mainstream media as a synonym for *assimilation*. In this sense, it is generally perceived as a one-way process in which migrants are required to leave their own culture behind and adopt the language, culture and practices of the host country. This misuse of the concept of integration is based on the understanding of society as homogenous and therefore creates a difference: the person that is not part of what is considered to be the norm is seen as an “outsider” and required to “fit into” what already exists. In doing so, a dominant versus dominated culture paradigm is established.

With this project we would like to challenge this model and the use of this word in EU terminology. In this sense, we wish to put forward that the most beneficial approach for Europe is to see migration as an enrichment, and therefore to create the basis for a *shared culture* or *remix culture*. In the same way we wish to see migration as an enrichment of terminology as well and encourage the use of different, inclusive and more representative terms such as *self-determination* and *active participation*.

Context in the Partner Cities

Seven partner cities are participating in this project. In order to develop a transeuropean methodology, it is important to analyse the context in each country and city involved.

Molenbeek, Belgium

Molenbeek-Saint-Jean is one of the most intercultural and poor communes in Belgium, with an unemployment rate widely above the average of the Brussels region and a clearly younger population than the national average. For more than 50 years, Molenbeek has been a place of reception favored by the successive waves of immigrations that Brussels experienced. For some of the newcomers, it is a crossing point that they leave as soon as they have acquired administrative and economic security. The situation at the *Petit château*, the main asylum seeker reception center in the Brussels region, perpetuates its role of first welcome area for migrants, and thus for refugees.

As far as refugees are concerned, after the wave of people who arrived in 2015, fleeing the wars in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan, the situation had changed. In 2016, notably after the

agreements with the Turkish government, the number of asylum applicants dropped. Several reception centers were closed to rationalise the places occupied in the different existing centers. Numerous asylum seekers were moved, again, to other regions of the country, in the centers that remained open. This is symptomatic of Belgium's approach to welcoming refugees, who regularly have to move around the country, following governmental decisions and regulations for their distribution on the Belgian territory.

Liverpool, England

The United Kingdom is 7th in Europe for asylum claims, in 12 months to June 2015 there were 35,045 claims for asylum.

In 2012, there were an estimated 469,700 people living in Liverpool. The city has a relatively young population, with the median age being 29 years compared to 35 years for England. 15.2% of the Liverpool population come from a minority ethnic group, equating to approximately 71,000 residents. Liverpool is the most deprived local authority in the country, with 42/291 (14%) of lower superoutput areas in the city being in the most deprived 1% nationally. Childhood poverty remains a major challenge, with over 60% of children in some wards living in poverty.

The Home Office provides accommodation for all eligible people seeking asylum whilst their cases are being processed, including transport to the accommodation. In March 2012, 6 national COMPASS (Commercial and Operating Managers Procuring Asylum Support) were awarded by the Home Office to three private providers (G4S, Serco and Clearel) to fulfil these duties.

Liverpool is one of 5 cities in the UK designated as initial accommodation sites. It is the north west base for refugees and asylum seekers, from which they are dispersed throughout the region.

Asylum Link Merseyside is one of the main agencies that works closely to support, manage and guide people looking for refugee status. They offer practical support, legal support and friendship to both asylum seekers and refugees. In 2015 they dealt with 954 claims for asylum. Of these they were broken down into: Iran (136), Eritrea (116), Sudan (74), Iraq (44), Libya (43), Ethiopia (42), Sri Lanka (36), Syria (36), Pakistan (34).

The rest of the nations are below 30 people making a claim.

However, these were official claims for asylum, they also dealt with approximately 3,000 refugees and other asylum seekers each month during 2015 with the highest amount being 3643 in one month alone.

The people seeking asylum in the Liverpool region are predominantly young men. Numbers of children and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the UK are noted to be low and declining. Numbers for unaccompanied minors aged 16-18 are higher. Any young people who are of school age are once identified as asylum seekers then managed by the local authority.

Nicosia, Cyprus

The Republic of Cyprus used to grant reception conditions in the form of welfare benefit, but the revised public benefits system for asylum seekers and persons with humanitarian protection status, developed by the Council of Ministers and voted by the House of Representatives in July 2013, is an example par excellence of the socially divisive policies of the government, which basically lead to further marginalisation of asylum seekers, as the revised system provides for two different levels of benefits: one for Cypriots/other EU citizens (minimum income guarantee), and another for asylum seekers and persons with humanitarian protection status, to replace what used to be a uniform for all public benefits system. The new system grants asylum seekers a reduced amount of public benefit and provides to receive a large part of it (for food, clothing, and footwear) in the form of vouchers . The system was adopted without any assessment or consideration as to the best possible way for the provision of material reception conditions to asylum seekers or whether the voucher system would cost less than monetary benefits and ignoring the complexity and cost of its management. It is certain that neither the reduced amount of public benefit nor the coupons system can guarantee asylum seekers decent living conditions. Rather, they condemn them to living in extreme poverty and misery, while their human dignity is further violated.

Moreover, once refugees apply for international protection in the country, they are referred to the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers in Kofinou until their asylum application is examined, a procedure, which often takes years to be completed. In short, the remote location of the Reception Centre in Kofinou, combined with the conditions that prevail within the centre today (lack of effective management, overpopulation) may serve to trigger the traumatic experiences that some refugees may have experienced in the past. Additionally, the remote location hampers the integration of refugees. KISA's experience indicates that the referral to the Centre is also being used by the authorities as a mechanism to deprive asylum seekers of their right to material reception conditions. More specifically, if asylum seekers refuse to stay in the centre, their refusal automatically leads to the termination of the provision of material reception conditions.

Rome, Italy

Since 2008, with the increasing conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region, the number of refugee arrivals in Italy has also increased.

About 25,000 applications for international protection were submitted in the first five months of 2015, with 64% of asylum seekers being of African origin (the top three countries are Nigeria, Gambia and Senegal), 24% of Asian origin, and 11% of European origin. The majority of them (90%) are men.

Since 2014 Ukraine is also among the top ten nationalities. In 2014 the asylum seekers from this country were around 2,000; the same number of Ukrainians applied for protection in Italy only in the first five months of 2015.

Lazio is the second region in Italy by number of foreign residents (636,524, that is 10,8% of its population). The city of Rome alone has 523,957 foreign residents (12.7% of its inhabitants). On average, foreign residents in Italy represent 8,2% of the population.

The year 2014 saw an increase of 50.4% of the residence permits issued for asylum and international protection in the province of Rome. As a consequence, the region's reception system was strengthened, with 4,790 seats available in Lazio, 68% of which in the capital. Around 2,000 seats for extraordinary reception were activated in Rome and in the province.

As of 2014, 117,396 foreign minors and 8,777 new Italian citizenship acquisitions were registered in Lazio. 7,235 of these concern the city of Rome only, with an increase of about 30% compared to 2013. However, the number of unregistered refugees has also increased. Most of them live in occupied buildings, tents and slums, notably in the countryside, in unacceptable living conditions and completely neglected by the institutions.

Despite the activation of a wider system, the reception facilities were paralysed by the increasing number of arrivals in 2014 and 2015. Many newcomers voluntarily escaped the identification procedures, since according to the EU's Dublin Regulation they would be obliged to apply for protection and residence in the Member State through which they enter the EU, and thus to stay in Italy.

In December 2015 the European Commission opened an infringement procedure for failure to identify tens of thousands of refugees landing on Italian shores. As from the end of 2015, the "hotspot approach" was launched to ensure a swift registration of newcomers and a fair distribution of refugees among EU member states. According to this system, the newcomers who "are not in need of protection" are immediately sent back to their country of origin; as a consequence, the implementation of this procedure contributed to increase the population of the informal settlements and to the further marginalisation of vulnerable groups.

The inhabitants of the informal settlements can be divided into two groups: those who arrived in Italy in the previous three months, and those who have been living there for more than three months. The members of the first group have recently arrived and are only waiting to move to another EU member state; the second group are those who have been excluded from the reception facilities. 14.8% of them are women; most of them are in their mid thirties, with only 25% being 40+. The top countries of origin are Eritrea (38.8%), Ghana (12.6%), Nigeria (6.6%) and Somalia (6.7%).

Almost all the informal settlements are completely neglected by the institutions and local authorities; they are "tolerated" due to the absence of alternative solutions. For this reason, their inhabitants are characterised by a widespread mistrust, if not downright hostility towards local authorities and organisations.

According to the Roman Minister of the Interior there were 103 illegal settlements in Rome as of December 2015. At least three of them have a population composed almost exclusively of Eritrean refugees.

Timisoara, Romania

The jurisdiction managing asylum application in Romania is the Asylum and Integration Directorate (IAD) of the General Inspectorate for Immigration, Ministry of Interior, through the 6 Regional Centres for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers in Bucharest, Galati, Giurgiu, Radauti, Şomcuta Mare and Timisoara.

According to the General Inspectorate for Immigration there were 1,266 asylum applications in 2015. Compared to 1,547 in 2014, the country registered a 18% decrease over the previous year. Among the top countries of origin of these asylum applicants are Syria (541), Iraq (214) and Afghanistan (96).

A form of protection was granted in 472 cases, with 230 persons being granted refugee status and 242 subsidiary protection, totaling a 59% approval rate. A total of 204 people were enrolled in the program of integration.

According to the General Inspectorate for Immigration in Romania, a total of 26,442 people submitted applications for some type of protection between 1991 and 2015. 4981 of these applicants were granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.

According to the statistics published by the General Inspectorate for Immigration in Romania, there are 644 refugee minors residing in Romania as of November 2015.

Most of them (334) live in Bucharest, the Romanian capital city. 53 minor refugees live in Timisoara as of the end of 2015, although this number covers 6 different districts in the western side of the country.

As of November 2015, the total number of refugees with a national ID in Romania is 2,492. 236 of these are registered in the western side of the country, in the Timisoara Center of the Immigration Office.

After the European Commission's decision to relocate a total of 160,000 refugees from Italy and Greece in all European countries, adopted by the EU Council in September 2015, Romania should receive a total of 6,351 refugees.

Romania's initial reaction was to reject the mandatory EU quota, along with Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

The Romanian president, Klaus Iohannis, publicly declared the country's opposition to the quota system in a press conference on September 7, 2015, stating that "Romania does not have the capacity to integrate these refugees in society" due to its poor infrastructure.

The latest polls show that over 80% of Romanian also oppose to refugees settling in Romania.

One possible cause of this reluctantly perception of the Romanian population towards refugees resettlement through quota system is due to the reduced capacity of governments

to manage the integration of immigrants-effectiveness. According to the Romanian Academic Society, “these perceptions indicate a low role of public authorities in facilitating the inclusion of migrants” since “the assistance of immigrants in Romania is made by non-governmental organizations, religious structures and migrant organizations and this not only compensates, but most often replaces the assistance that could be given by the local authorities”.

On the other hand, many initiatives came from the local communities to support refugees in Romania. Many non-governmental organizations provide complementary social and legal services to asylum seekers and refugees upon their arrival, for example the Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania AIDRom, the Romanian National Council for Refugees (CNRR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the ICAR Foundation and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).

Sevilla, Spain

In 2015, almost 15,000 people made a formal application for international protection, the highest annual level recorded in Spain. The high increase in the arrival of refugees from Syria and Ukraine justifies the considerable variation from 2014, when there were just 5,947.

The remarkable increase of applicants from Syria (5,724 against the 1,679 of 2014) and Ukraine (3,420 vs. 946) largely explains this historical fact, which, however, only represents 1% of those attended by the 28 countries of the European Union.

So far this year, 611 people have applied for asylum in Andalusia compared to 480 registered throughout 2015. Currently, as indicated from the Government Delegation in Andalusia, 1,091 people are entitled to asylum in Andalusia, 453 of them are from Syria and 202 are Ukrainians.

Most of these people are attended in the province of Seville. In this regard, 39% of refugees registered in the National Refugee Reception System in Andalusia are at the Refugee Reception Centre (CAR) of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security, located in Sevilla Este. The rest of people are distributed among different specialized NGOs with state-funded places. These are Red Cross (267), CEAR (226), Accem (115) and Cepaim (59) based in the provinces of Cadiz, Cordoba, Malaga and Seville.

Until the closing of this report, only 105 people had come to Spain as part of relocation commitments, 18 by the end of 2015 and 87 in the second half of May 2016, in this case as part of a group of 586 people refugees that the Government has announced that it will arrive before August 2016 through relocation and resettlement.

The asylum, international protection and resettlement of refugees competencies belong exclusively to the Government. Since 1984, the central government funds the reception and integration programmes, which now is a matter for the Ministry of Employment and Social Security.

Article 31 states that the host will be made primarily "through the different centers of the competent Ministry and those that are funded through non-governmental organizations" with which the state maintains a coordinating position.

Due to citizen mobilization to demand for refugees reception fleeing mainly from the war in Syria, different regions and municipalities communities promoted proposals for hosting, boosted refugees care offices, approved motions to be considered as refugees' cities, opened spaces to channel donations of all types (private loan apartments, reception at home, blankets, clothing) organized volunteers offering etcetera.

Berlin, Germany

In 2015 Germany received more than 476,000 new asylum applications, which is the highest number among all EU countries. However, according to German officials more than a million have been counted in Germany's EASY system, which manages distribution of newcomers throughout the country.

Among the top countries of origin of these asylum applicants were Syria (162,510), Albania (54,762), Kosovo (37,095), Afghanistan (31,902) and Iraq (31,379).

67% of them were men, and only 33% were women.

Most of them (35%) were aged 0-17, then 18-24 (24%), 25-29 (14%), 30-34 (10%) and, finally, 35-39 (6%); the remaining 11% were aged 40+.

Overall, there were 587 applications for every 100,000 residents. The EU average was 260.

In the same year, the city of Berlin (3,610,156 estimated inhabitants) welcomed 79,034 refugees, out of which 54,325 remained in the city.

First of all, refugees who arrive in Germany need to register as asylum-seekers in the nearest reception facility. Once they are registered, as mentioned above, they are distributed across the 16 federal states through the EASY system. The distribution is based on the "Königstein formula", calculated according to the state's tax revenue and its population.

The distribution quota for Berlin for 2015 was 5.04557%.

Aims of a Musical and Language Training for Refugee and Local Youth

- To use performing arts as a driver to engage them into the local community and strengthen their participation in cultural and social life at the local level
- Setting up regular activities, to create a sense of structure, predictability and familiarity in a completely new environment, as well as a sense of security for the young refugees who have been through many traumatic experiences and whose transition to adulthood is especially challenging

- To promote exchanges and connections between refugee and local youth, create positive common experiences: joy, friendship, the pride of creating something beautiful together, learning and expanding boundaries
- To improve and develop the young refugees' social, artistic and language skills through the medium of performing arts: acting, singing, training, developing concept and organise a musical representation
- To give the young participants the chance to develop and enhance their creative and innovative potential
- To develop seven original musicals which will be performed in seven European cities: Rome, Sevilla, Berlin, Molenbeek, Timisoara, Liverpool, Nicosia

Objectives

- To give both refugee and local youth the confidence to function in society as a positive and confident individual
- To enable young people's ability to develop their self-esteem and self-expression, and to improve their self-perception while at the same time opening up their curiosity for other people and other stories
- To broaden horizons and raise cultural awareness on both sides
- To give young people a unique insight into the world of performing arts
- To encourage and develop the young participants' creativity
- To foster cooperation among cultural organisations and actors across Europe in the field of integration
- To produce a documentary film about NiCeR in order to raise awareness among a broader audience

Pilot Projects and Inspirations

NiCeR is the result of a collaboration between seven partner cities, each one collaborating with theatre experts who have their own established methods and techniques to deliver a performing art workshop and stage a performance.

The following methods and some of their elements are used as a source of inspiration for the methodology of the project NiCeR.

1. The Theatre of the Oppressed

The Theatre of the Oppressed is a set of tools aimed at allowing anybody to share and stage oppressions. Once an issue has been staged and studied, participants try to tackle the problem and rehearse solutions in a safe theatrical framework.

Forum Theatre is one of the main techniques, where the audience has the opportunity to both observe and act on stage in order to engage in an empowering process, made of critical thinking and tools for action.

The basic **principles** of this methodology are:

- The collective analysis of common and shared problems relative to the cultural landscape of each city, which contribute to breaking down barriers and to facilitate the creation of a community
- To stage problematic situations:
 1. to share daily difficulties and challenges experienced by the participants
 2. to analyze the root causes of these situations
 3. to explore possible solutions to these problems
- To raise questions: the scene itself does not provide any truth or answer to the problems staged. The aim is to start a collective research and engagement. The actors and the audience are engaged together in finding challenges, discovering common mistakes, testing solutions and deciding together which is the best way to act and change the situation.

Selection of exercises and games, that are gradual and easily accessible to anybody.

The sequence proposed is meant to allow anybody to express and overcome oppression, beyond any linguistic barrier. It consists of:

- De-mechanization games: to foster team-building, participation and everybody's expressiveness
- Image theatre: to express an issue through the use of one's body, the interaction with other people's body, and to quickly represent complex situations through simple images. Image theatre is a very precious tool for the understanding of tricky situations and for problem solving. Images are also used to create a forum theatre play where the audience will be allowed to intervene.
- Forum theatre: to encourage people to try social changes, rehearsing possible solutions, discovering difficulties and consequences of each proposal.
- Barcelona Names: Introduce yourself by shaking hands, giving your name to and taking the name of the person in the front. Exchange names until you find your name again.
- Name and Clap: in a circle, by clapping your hands on your left you take the name of person on your left, by clapping your hands on your right you pass your name to the person on your right. The aim is to create more turns in order to create confusion and de-mechanize people.
- Extraterrestrial: in couples, one partner plays the role of the human being who tries to convince the other person, who plays the extraterrestrial, to wear a jacket. The extraterrestrial refuses or does not understand, thus creating difficulties and challenges.
- Colombian Hypnosis: in couples, one partner leads the other by moving the palm of his/her hand. The aim is to help the partner move in several ways and directions,

making him/her aware of forgotten and unexpected possibilities, encouraging mobility, freedom of movements and body expression. You can freeze the movements when an interesting image comes out and invite the other participants to comment, analyze and think of a possible context for the images.

- Image of power: two people come to the center of a circle and put themselves in a position of handshake, thus creating a “statue”. At first, the participants are invited to describe the statue and make several hypothesis describing the situation and the two characters. Secondly, they are requested to change the position of the statue and create an image where one person has more power than the other one. It is possible to create more images of power, in order to reflect and discuss together: what is power? Which position gives more power to the people?
- Image of the real and the ideal society: divided into two groups, one group creates the image of our current society, representing the problems we have to face in our project; one group creates the image of the ideal society we want to build, representing our idea of self-determination and organisation, inclusion and so on. How can we move from the real to the ideal situation? The aim of the exercise is to reflect and create together a concrete image of this transition.
- Example of Forum Theatre: one person (the oppressor) is seated on a chair and another person (the oppressed) is going to take a seat on the second chair. The oppressor prevents the oppressed to do what he/she wants. The participants are invited to test different strategies to face the oppressor and get the seat. The exercise ends with a collective analysis on both the pros and cons of each proposal: what are the risky consequences of the proposals? Which solutions appear to work well?

2. Opéra Q

There are three main principles when carrying out a performing arts training project:

- Passion
- Patience: try not to focus short term, immediate results but rather on the long term effect
- Repetition: it can be considered as the mother of all pedagogies. It is extremely important to create a ritual, a routine allowing every participant to find his/her space, the reference points that help everyone progress and understand. The whole process has to be carried out as a sort of ritual, so that every participant can gradually leave their everyday life and worries (job, family, friends) behind and become part of a group.

It is also important to find the appropriate space to carry out the trainings: the participants should have enough space to rehearse and be free to move and express their body and voice. In this sense, the setting is essential to the success of the whole project.

When working with young people coming from a disadvantaged neighborhood, it is essential to build their trust by avoiding the traditional school setting and underlining that they are not there to be evaluated and, most importantly, that they will not be forced to attend. Loyalty is created once they have the freedom to decide spontaneously to participate in the trainings. In this sense, practical things like a visit to the theatre or going to a performance together as a group can, little by little, create trust and build a stronger relationship.

It is essential to create a form establishing two main elements:

- the actual organisation of the workshops and trainings (venue, timetable, how to recruit the participants)
- the proposed pedagogy (singing, dancing, acting): it is best when every participant is invited to take part in all the activities, rather than to let him/her express a preference.

Once this main structure is established, one needs to create room to provide flexibility. It is essential to always keep in mind the participants' needs.

JugendtheaterBüro Berlin

JugendtheaterBüro's work focuses on people who would not normally get the chance to get into theatre production.

The activities of this organisation are based on three main pillars:

- Political base: JugendtheaterBüro's methodology does not include the word *integration*, since it presupposes the existence of a leading, dominant culture to which a dominated culture needs to adapt. They prefer to see it as a two-way process and rather use other expressions such as *shared culture* or *remix culture*
- Group production: for every production staged by JugendtheaterBüro there is a director, but behind the result is actually the leadership of the whole group. In this sense, self-determination is achieved through self-organisation. As a result, a more "expendable" leadership is created, since everybody in the group gets the ability and skills to eventually take over and continue the project.

- Artistic work: the participants usually work with *happenings*. In this sort of performance, the key elements are planned, but there is plenty of room for improvisation. Another important element is the *new dramaturgy*: every performance is preceded by field work and research. The participants try to intervene and be active parts of current debates and then to bring them back in the theatre and in their performance. In this sense, every process is dominated by the idea of *symmetry of knowledge*: the knowledge of the participants needs to be considered as equal to the knowledge of the coach. The coach has the role to make this knowledge emerge through *elicitation*, that is collecting information and reactions through specific inputs.

3. RARE Studio Liverpool:

Rare Studio is specialised in working with young people from a range of different backgrounds to develop their confidence, skills and ability in life through performing arts training.

Many of their students are from a disadvantaged upbringing, are from disaffected areas and are disengaged in education. At Rare they work hard to:

- Identify potential students at risk from social isolation
- Re engage them into society with students of their own age
- Encourage positive experiences through the arts
- Offer help and advice on progression into education or employment

Rare Studio has a specialist outreach team specialized in community based work, identifying those in need of intervention and help. This team works hard to encourage young people to engage in the programme through a range of classes, workshops, performances and work placement scheme. Recruitment is done by a mixture of word of mouth, recommendations from schools and colleges of those who may have fell through the system and pupil referral. Participants can access weekly classes in:

- Dance
- Drama
- Singing
- Music
- Musical Theatre
- Script writing
- Directing
- Next step support

One of their main method to stage a production is Verbatim theatre, a form of documentary theatre in which plays are constructed from the precise words spoken by people interviewed about a particular event or topic.

In order to give an honest account of the current refugee crisis and to give ownership to the participants in that they will be fully in control of how much or little they would like to divulge, Verbatim is a very effective method of extracting stories and then with a writer and director developing that work for stage or even film.

The playwright interviews people that are connected to the topic that the play is focused on and uses their testimony to construct the piece. In this way they seek to achieve a degree of authority akin to that represented by the news. Such plays may be focused on politics, disasters or even sporting events.

A verbatim style of theatre uses the real words from interviewees to construct the play which is not written in a traditional sense, but is conceived, collected and collated. It is a creative type of drama to help tell the story of what actually happened’.

Project Outline

Using the lessons learned from our pilot project and different elements from every partner organisation's specific method, we have been able to create a methodology for the implementation of a performing arts training project for young refugees and locals across Europe.

In order to develop a strong performing arts project that engages and brings together young locals and refugees one needs to think carefully about the following key elements:

1. Staff – finding the correct practitioners to deliver the training
2. Recruitment – selecting and recruiting the right participants
3. Structure – how to structure the language workshops and trainings in order to fulfill the aims and objectives
4. Curriculum – the actual content of the performing arts training and of the language workshops; Tools that can be used to deliver the curriculum
5. Tools for the monitoring of the participants’ progress
6. Developing the musical production
7. Outcome and achievements

Staff: Finding the Correct Practitioners to Deliver the Training

At the beginning of the project, every partner has already identified a project coordinator and created a team of committed and experienced experts which will guide and support the implementation of the activities.

For this particular project, a series of key professional figures needs to be identified:

1. A **vocal coach**: he guides and supports the participants in learning how to work on their voice, control it and improve its quality. He needs to have proven experience in music and singing.

2. A **theatre director/drama teacher**: the young participants take complete ownership of the project, however this figure supports them in writing the screenplay, the songs, the music (possibly trying to focus on the traditional music of the countries of the participants), and in the creation of the scenery and props.

He needs to be able to support the young participants in specific elements of the project such as:

- Acting
- Dancing
- Songwriting
- Creative writing
- Backstage
- Sound and lighting
- Musical theatre
- Folk music and songs
- Scenic design

3. A **language coach**: this is a key figure in the facilitation of the relationship between the young refugees and the locals. The language coach guides the young participants to the understanding and comprehension of the different languages through songs and other innovative techniques such as storytelling or role-playing.

4. A **social worker**, who acts as a facilitator for the welfare of the group, promoting cohesion and the empowerment of every participant.

5. A **local coordinator**, who oversees the day to day running of the project and manage the coordination between the international partners and the local project.

6. A **local network of partners** such as local authorities, social workers, refugee welcome centers which support and collaborate with each partner at the local level.

The young people need a regular and committed staff so they can feel secure. They may not respond to a variety of different people coming in and out, as they need to trust and believe the practitioners.

The qualities that the staff need are:

- Ability to connect and relate to the world of young people
- Motivation to teach
- Passion for change
- Empathy
- Good communication skills
- Ability to structure and manage a group of young people in a friendly and easygoing way
- Flexibility and creativity
- Will to take risks and experiment
- Patience and understanding
- Based in the city where the trainings will take place
- Experience in the performing arts industry
- Experience in teaching to young people and notably in working with a multicultural and multilingual youth group.

Recruitment: Selecting and Recruiting the Right Participants

The target of the present project includes young refugees and non-refugees between 9 and 25 years old.

As far as the term *refugee* is concerned, our methodology refers to the official definition provided by the *Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951): “the term *refugee* shall apply to any person who (...) owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” - article 1, letter A (2)¹.

A person who holds a refugee status is issued a residence permit for political asylum.

Persons who cannot be protected either through recognition of refugee status or through the right to asylum may be entitled to the subsidiary protection, which is granted if the applicant can demonstrate a personal persecution according to the same criteria described by the Geneva Convention (see above).

¹ Please consider that this declaration was written in 1951 when the concept of race was still in use; later on, research demonstrated the inadequacy of this concept and nowadays race is no longer considered as a valid scientific category.

In this sense, the group of non-refugees should include young participants who, regardless of age, do not hold either a refugee status or a subsidiary protection status.

The young participants need to have the following qualities:

- Be motivated, committed and want to attend: the project will not work if the coach forces them
- Know beforehand that they will be available throughout the whole duration of the project; however, the staff itself need to have a flexible attitude and understand that, although requiring commitment and availability from the participants is important, refugee youth are a vulnerable group and their lifestyle is challenging and not always predictable
- Have some interest in music, dance and theater
- Be willing to learn, to discover, to open to new experiences, opportunities, ideas
- Be curious and willing to meet, get to know and establish relationships with new people
- If possible, be able and ready to work as part of a group (relate to the other participants and the staff, deal with and manage conflict); however, we should not forget that we are working with vulnerable people and, for this reason, teamwork skills cannot be a criterion for exclusion as such. It is thus up to the staff to create an inclusive environment that caters for individual needs and allows everyone to take part in the activities according to their own rhythm and explore and develop their own skills
- If possible, have basic communication skills, in order to be able to work productively and in harmony with a heterogeneous group and with the staff
- Be willing to agree with a set of key norms that are essential to facilitate and manage group work
- Be a heterogeneous group in terms of age, social and geographical background, as well as in terms of gender: an equal number of boys and girls would be preferable

How to carry out the recruitment process

In order to recruit the young participants (refugees and non-refugees) one should go through the following process.

First of all, each organisation needs to create a network in its own pilot city and promote the project among key local players such as:

- Cultural centers, NGOs, social workers, refugee welcome centers and other associations that are in direct contact with refugees;
- The schools (primary, secondary, high school) present in the district in which the workshops are going to take place: school directors, families and parents
- Public institutions

This collaboration represents a necessary step as it will allow young refugees to be directly involved in the local community and to become active participants in it.

Once a pool of potential participants is identified, the final recruitment will be carried out by directly investigating the motivation and availability of each participant.

To do so, we agreed that for a number of reasons the use of a written questionnaire should be avoided at this stage of the project. In fact, we believe this is not the best approach when the aim is to stimulate the young participants' interest in the project as well as their awareness, motivation and commitment. Moreover, since there will be a feedback and evaluation questionnaire at the end of the project, an initial questionnaire would create a feeling of excessive control from the staff over the participants.

In our opinion, a valid alternative is represented by a face-to-face interview, preferably in the form of a group interview, a focus group or a workshop.

In fact, we believe that one-to-one interviews may create a feeling of discomfort at this stage of the project, notably within the refugee group, since they may recall previous traumatic experiences. Also, it would be preferable to avoid an excessively formal approach, which could end up intimidating and discouraging the young participants.

For example, it could be effective to organise an initial taster workshop, both in schools and in refugee shelters or welcome classes, or directly in the theatre where the workshop will take place, facilitated by a person they can relate to: also young, with a similar background, used to working with young people and vulnerable groups and able to stimulate their interest and build their motivation and expectations.

In this context, the potential participants have the chance to try out a theater workshop session, get to know each other through games and icebreakers, familiarise with the setting and the staff. At the same time, the staff can directly investigate their motivation and personality through the way the potential participants react, their body language.

As far as the questions that the potential participants will be asked during the recruitment process, we believe that one of the most crucial aspect is to avoid discrimination between the two groups (refugees and non-refugees). It is important to consider the participants as individuals and, as such, to create a setting in which they all have an equal status.

At the very beginning it could be necessary to acknowledge the presence of two different groups; in the initial phase, the participants themselves will probably feel the need to look for belonging in their own sub-group. However, the success of the project depends on the staff's ability to create an environment where every group has the same rules and is working for the same results and for a common goal, that is meaningful for both groups. This way, at the end of the project the two groups will become increasingly aware that they actually belong to one group, made of young and equal individuals.

We believe that the first step to the creation of a setting in which every participant has an equal status is to ask the two groups (refugees and non-refugees) the same questions.

When dealing with the most vulnerable groups, the refugee group, some pressing questions such as for example their daily routine and their availability for a four-month weekly workshop can be asked directly to the social workers and the centers working with them on a regular basis, who know their personal story and everyday activities.

Overall, we believe that it would be useful to start with an investigation about their interest in music, dancing and acting (“Can you sing/dance/play music? Would you like to sing/dance/play music?”); after the taster class, the participants could be asked more direct questions aimed at creating awareness about the participants' responsibility and the aims of the project, such as:

- Did you like what you experienced today?
- Would you be interested in taking part in a similar project?
- Why do you think you are interested in?
- What are your expectations about this kind of project?
- How do you think you could contribute to such project?
- What do you think you can learn from it, and what can we learn from you?
- What kind of difficulties do you think you could experience in this context?
- What kind of gratification would you be happy to receive at the end of such project?

During the taster class, the participants' interest could also be stimulated with more general questions appealing to their need to find a safe space to express themselves and their ideas as young people:

- Would you like to send a message to the world? / Would you like to do something good for the world?
- In what way would you like to express this desire: dancing, singing, writing a song...?

At the end of the group interview process, an internal observation sheet containing useful information for the creative team, theatre and vocal coaches could be prepared and filled out: the participant's motivation, availability, interest and preferences in terms of performing arts.

At the end of the NiCeR recruitment process, 30 young people were selected: 15 refugees and 15 non-refugees.

Once the participants were selected, a list containing the following elements for each one of them was prepared:

1. Name
2. Age

3. Gender
4. Country of origin
5. Contact: e-mail and/or phone and/or address and/or Facebook contact

Structure: How to Structure the Course to Reach the Aims and Objectives

In all seven partner cities, the recruitment phase took place between September and December 2016, that is in the three months prior to the beginning of the workshops.

The theatre and the language workshops were in fact organised from January to April 2017. During these four months, the theatre workshop took place four hours per week outside school hours, for example between 5pm and 8pm or on weekend sessions (one whole day on Saturday or Sunday).

The same structure was applied to the language workshop, which however only happened two hours per week.

The Theater Workshops

Curriculum: What should be involved in the training

In order to develop a performing arts training, we believe that it is essential to define beforehand a few elements that the young people should achieve after completing the training, such as:

- Have developed their self-confidence and self-esteem
- Have developed their communication skills / language skills
- mutual understanding of each other's culture
- develop friendship with each other
- Have some knowledge of acting techniques
- Have some knowledge of music and singing techniques
- Have the ability to improvise and be creative with texts, songs, and music
- Be confident to perform in a group
- Gain technical skills that could be useful for their future integration in the professional world

In general, the curriculum should involve the following elements:

Introductions to the fundamentals of acting:

- Acting techniques - Task and tactics
- Group pieces

- Devising and improvisation
- Musical theatre
- Performance technique

Introduction to music and singing:

- Singing techniques
- Warm up and understanding the voice
- Solos and/or group pieces
- Songwriting
- Performance technique

Possibly, introductions to the fundamentals of dance.

Backstage, scenography:

- Creative writing
- Directing
- Scenography elements
- Staging
- Costumes, masks, make-up
- Lighting
- Sound

Structure of the theater workshop

The curriculum itself followed two parallel lines that were developed gradually and at the same time throughout the four months in which the theatre workshop took place:

- The development of the participants' (basic) skills in the performing arts
- The development of the musical itself: topic, story, characters and script

The theatre workshop was carried out for four hours every week from January to April 2017, the final performance being scheduled for May 2017.

Considering this time frame, our suggestion concerning the distribution of the activities is the following:

- January 2017

Performing arts skills development and team building

The first month was dedicated almost exclusively to the needs and the interests of the participants as well as to team building. The main aim was to spend time gaining the young people's trust and creating a group that is able to work together and to develop as a team.

To do so, games and exercises were used to create confidence and build relationships among the participants.

Moreover, the participants also started to explore the fundamentals of acting, singing, dancing and backstage without going into too much depth but simply to understand with which activities they were most comfortable with.

Through specific exercises they learnt to develop and understand their body expression: how to move in the space of the stage, how the other members of the group react to one's body movements, how to find balance in this space, how to create stories through their own bodies. Through exercise and warm ups, they started to understand how their voice works and how they could use it.

Development of the musical

The first month was dedicated to very general group discussions about the main topic of the musical and the issues connected to it, with the aim to narrow down the options and start thinking of a possible specific topic of the musical.

- February-March 2017

Performing arts skills development

During this second phase, the young participants' interests and needs started to emerge more clearly. For this reason, these two months were dedicated to the identification and development of each participant's skills and talents. At the same time, the group started working more closely, as a team, on the fundamentals of each subject. Therefore, through improvisation and dance, the participant's abilities were identified and a first draft for the distribution of roles was organised.

Development of the musical

Throughout the month of February, a dramaturgy/creative writing atelier was carried out, during which the participants learned how to write songs and dialogues for the final musical and develop their own musical piece.

In order to achieve this, the staff suggested the following exercises:

- Brainstorming on the main topic of the musical: collect words connected to it, discuss within the group and select the most meaningful words around which they could build the story
- Group discussions about issues related to the main topic of the musical, exchange of shared knowledge or personal experience connected to it.
- Creative writing: a topic was chosen and the participants were asked to write a short and creative text about it

Following these exercises, the main story was defined by the group during the month of March.

- April 2017

During the last month, the workshops mainly focused on the development of the musical production: writing of the script and of the songs, distribution of roles, costumes etc.

- May 2017

Final performance

Given these general guidelines, the theatre directors were able to include elements that were more specific to their own established method.

For example, the Theatre of the Oppressed Method (Image Theatre, Forum Theatre) is based on improvisation and on a completely different technique when it comes to writing the script, which is entirely improvised.

In this sense, the first month was dedicated to general improvisation techniques, the second and the third month to more specific techniques and the images through which the final story was created, and in the last month the specific scenes of the stories were rehearsed and improvised until, little by little, the dialogues and the story were more and more defined.

Three steps to create an intercultural musical

In order to achieve the final stage of the process, that is the performance, the structure of **the workshop needs to go through three main phases.**

The first is *exploration*. In this phase, the group is created, and the relationship between the members as well as the rituals and the working routine are built. It is the time dedicated to self-discovery through stories, personal experiences, identifying and sharing knowledge, personal tastes, desires, talents, resources that characterise each participant.

This phase represents thus both the discovery of the other and the construction of a common baggage for the future definition of the performance. There is also the need to agree on a way of communication that takes into account the sharing of languages and the possibilities of translation among the workshop participants, and then allow those who do not yet speak the language of the host country to advance and make progress.

The working process also depends on the age of the participants and needs to adapt to a certain variability of the group.

More concretely, the workshops need to include vocal training and singing lessons as well as motion and physical activities, improvisational acting techniques, and group discussions about the main topic and the structure of the final performance: will the participants want to focus on their own experiences and write an autobiographical story, or rather focus on imaginary narrative? What sort of music will they play in the final performance? Will there be a clear distinction among the three disciplines (acting, singing, dancing) or will everyone

engage in all three of them? Which one(s) of the participants would like to play a solo role? Who will bring their own creative talent into the music, writing, movement, etc...?

As this particular workshop only lasted four months, it was also necessary to gather texts, music tracks, video clips, etc. which were representative of the participants' identity and of what they wanted to show during the performance. This represented another way for the participants and the staff to get to know each other more deeply, while at the same time collecting helpful material that could be used in the final performance, together with the participants' original creations.

In this phase of exploration the individual skills and those of the group as a whole are introduced in a more general way for all the three disciplines. In order to contribute to the common knowledge and experiences, common activities, visits and shows can also be organised.

The second phase is about *construction*. In this phase, the main elements are defined: the story, its artistic elements and the definition of a balance between music, theater, dance; the selection of the material that has been collected over the previous weeks (excerpts of texts, music suggestions, drafts of the structure); the creation of new elements which will be included in the planned structure; songs, dialogues, choreography sketches; definition of each participant's role according to the character that they have to play; distribution of roles and phases of the performances among the participants, so that they can engage themselves and their ideas in that direction.

In the meantime, the participant training process in the three disciplines continues through exercise, improvisation, performance, rehearsals etc. The common activities too, which provides an opportunity for the young people to meet and share.

The third phase is the *realisation or achievement*. Before the final performance, a musical needs to be rehearsed. Everything has to be refined until it is mastered to perfection. The actors have to take their characters even further and get deep into the acting. Their body has to map out the choreography. The choir needs to sing in harmony. Such a production needs a lot of adjustments. As a result, during the long creation process, the show undergoes various changes in order to acquire an artistic value as well as improve in coherence. Every person participating with their soul and body in this collective creation makes it even more vibrant and alive. The rehearsals and trainings are therefore far from mechanical. In fact, the rehearsal is a permanent act of embodiment. As the group may be altered and some participants might leave during the process, a character can be assigned to different actors successively. The characters can thus be interpreted in a different way by each actor. It is in fact all about giving a frame to the artistic work while at the same time developing a flexible approach.

The Language Workshops

During the same four months, two hours per week were dedicated to the language workshops. These sessions were facilitated by a language coach, who assisted the refugees and locals in their interaction.

The aim of the language workshops was to support the young newcomers in learning and understanding the local language and culture in a context of exchange, different from the traditional frontal teaching approach that is typical of a school setting.

Therefore the role of the language coach was primarily the creation of an environment where every participant had the opportunity to fully participate, contribute to and learn from this exchange, regardless of their native language or status.

At the end of the workshops, the young refugees should feel more empowered thanks to the new knowledge acquired over the previous months and the friendships made with their local “classmates”. This will enable them to gain more confidence and achieve a sense of belonging in their new home.

It is important to remember that the participants came together to create a musical. In this context, each one of them already possesses some very powerful tools that go beyond spoken language and that can support their exchange and mutual learning process: music, acting and dance.

In a context when not all the participants shared a common language, it was thus crucial for the language coach to focus on these elements when assisting the exchange. Local songs, gestures, movements were used to support the young refugees in their language learning process. The story and the script of the musical was also used to help the refugees learn new words. Moreover, the fact of having a precise goal, that is the musical performance at the end of the workshops, further motivated the group during the process.

The group dimension is essential, as the young people who already speak the language supported, translated, helped the non-locals, constantly accompanying them towards their common goal.

One exercise that can be used in this context is that of the *language choir*: the participants read a text out loud together, trying to use the right intonation and pronunciation. This way, the participants who do not know the language will not feel too exposed, but can at the same time express themselves and learn vocabulary in the new language.

It is also important to remember that cultural diversity is among the main elements of the musical and at the heart of the project itself. In this sense, the non-locals can also be encouraged for example to bring their own traditional music and translate it with the help of the locals, which would encourage the exchange.

The language learning process can also be integrated in common activities, such as visits to exhibitions, shows, tours around the city and so on. Such events will provide further help

and support, notably to the participants who do not master the language very well or even at all.

Another interesting exercise is represented by the tandem approach: during a specific time of the language workshop, the participants can split into couples, formed by one local and one refugee, and start a conversation. This approach will also help create friendships and connections which can be extended and last outside of the workshop context.

Lastly, the school teachers who helped during the participant selection process can also provide their support and work together with the staff to facilitate the refugees' language learning process.

Monitoring Tools: Measuring the impact of the project

Guidelines for Conducting Focus Groups with the participants in the NiCeR project

Introduction: Focus group is a qualitative research method which takes the form of a group interview, a facilitated discussion led by a series of questions around a specific topic. Below are some instructions for the facilitator of the focus group. The information collected through the focus groups should be seen as complementing data obtained through the other evaluation instruments planned.

Duration of the focus group: 60 - 90 minutes

Participants: The recommended number of participants in a focus group is between 6-12, in order to ensure a good interaction and group dynamics and allow everybody enough time to express opinions. A focus group can also work well with 15 participants. Therefore, in each location of the NICER project, **two focus groups should be organised: one for the local participants and one for the refugees.**

Organising the focus group

The participants should be informed about the focus group even before the final performance and this should be presented as a discussion at the end of the activities with a facilitator. You need to choose the best time and location in order to ensure attendance of all participants. The best room is a room where participants can sit in a circle and see each other well, without physical barriers, with appropriate lighting and isolated visually and audio from the surrounding environment. Having a large table in the middle of the room, a classical classroom style setting or a room that is too small or too large, might not generate the desired dynamics of the interactions in the group. Also, if people from outside can see what is going on in the room or if they can hear what is being discussed, participants might feel uncomfortable sharing their views. The equal value given to opinion of all participants should be reflected in the room setting: all participants should have a similar type of seats and with a similar kind of positioning in the room.

It is important to make sure that participants are informed in advance about the duration of the focus group, about the fact that their attendance is necessary for the whole duration and that they will be asked to share personal opinions in an open way and that the opinions provided will remain confidential.

Opening and introduction

The moderator has to ensure that all invited participants are present and sit in a circle. If the moderator is not known by the participants, he/she should introduce himself/herself.

Then the moderator will introduce the rules for focus group conduction, emphasising the following elements:

- Confidentiality of the information provided. The discussion is recorded (audio only) but the recorded material will only be used for elaborating a report and will not be made public; Although in the report there will be possible quotes from statements of participants, there will be no way of identifying the person who made a specific statement and the names of participants will not be made public without their agreement;
- The discussion will be approximately 60 minutes, with the possibility of extending it to 90 minutes if this is needed to allow participants to express their views;
- All participants should listen to each other respectfully but they are encouraged to formulate comments regarding what the others are saying. Interventions and interruptions are possible. Disagreement or different views on a certain topic are normal and all the opinions will be noted, including minority ones;
- Participants speak clearly and loudly enough, one at a time;
- Because of the time limitation, the moderator will interrupt the participants in case of diversion and will keep the conversation close to the main line;
- Participants express their personal opinions and wishes in a way that will not harm or affect in a negative way the others.

When everyone has confirmed agreement with these principles and rules, the moderator starts recording and moves to the next part of the focus group session.

Introduction of participants: The moderator opens the discussion, giving the floor to each participant for a short introduction if the moderator is not known to participants.

The moderator might need to pay special attention to balancing power relations and encouraging some participants to speak and will make sure that all get to intervene. It might be necessary to adapt the formulation of the questions in order to ensure that they are well understood also by all the participants in the focus group.

The focus group discussion

The moderator will then address the following questions (a printed list of the questions may help):

1. Do you keep in touch with [local nationals/people having migrant background]? If so, in which kind of relationship you are (colleagues, friends, acquaintances, relatives, and so on)? Otherwise, if you don't, could you explain why?
2. Is there a difference in the number and quality of the relationships with [local nationals/people having migrant background] now, compared with the start of the NiCER activities? If yes, please describe, explain what you think generated the change and give examples illustrating the change.
3. How are the social spaces (pubs, public parks, restaurants, training courses, and so on) that you are used to frequent: [local nationals/people having migrant background] hang-out there separately or together?
4. Are there places where you go now and where you did not use to go before the activities? Give examples? What made you decide to go there? With whom are you going?
5. When you get in touch with [local nationals/people having migrant background], do you feel unsafe and/or uncomfortable? If so, why? Has this changed over the past weeks?
6. What are your impressions related to the migration in [your country / the country where you live]?

Closing the discussion: The moderator has to give the opportunity to participants to make final comments or to ask questions (if they have any). After that, the moderator has to thank for the participation and remind that these ideas are useful for the project team.

NOTE: The suggested sequence of the questions is not mandatory. Changes and flexibility in the order of asking are allowed. It is important to discuss all questions and each participant should have the opportunity to express personal opinions and share information for each of the questions. In the case that participants start the discussion on a question that is not asked yet, the moderator will not ask that question again.

Reporting

The discussion will be recorded, but it is important that the moderator does a short memo immediately after the end of the discussion with the main ideas resulted; points out and writes key quotations that could be used in the analyses; sketches out briefly his/her impressions of the participants – their involvement in the discussion and their reactions to specific topics, as well as any other elements that are not grasped by the recording.

The recording should be written down as accurate as possible in a file and the moderator comments should be inserted at the beginning of the document or in line with a different colour.

Send the documents and the recording to the evaluation coordinator.