YOU ENG AGE

ERASMUS+ PROJECT

# How to engage youth in culture — Handbook

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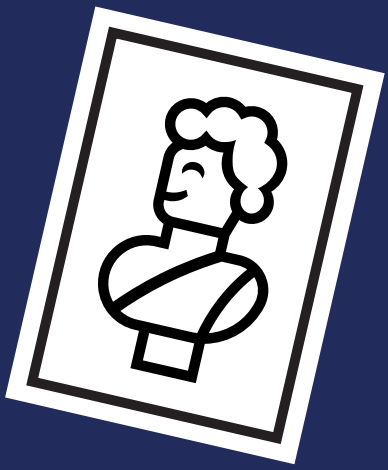
# Content


1 How to Engage Youth in Culture

2 How to engage youth in creating successful networks and partnerships in culture

3 From methodology to practical example

# SECTION 1: How to Engage Youth in Culture



This handbook is the result of a partnership between the Croatian association Friends of Heritage and the Romanian association ARCHÉ, created on the basis of a joint exchange of experiences and aiming to contribute to raising the quality of work with young people.

In our many years of work in the field of preservation, promotion and valorisation of local and national cultural heritage, we encountered numerous and diverse challenges and a handbook such as this would have come in handy. This is why, based on our own as well as other organisations' experience, we strive to offer models for finding solutions that encourage and support youth initiatives and work with young people. Through this handbook, we put forth a roadmap - a methodology and a set of tools - to facilitate the process of starting and promoting active youth engagement in the field of culture.

The CSO Friends of Heritage - Amici Hereditatis was founded in 2005 as an initiative of the citizens of Ivanić-Grad (a small town of around 13,000 people not far from Zagreb, the capital of Croatia) out of passion for local historical and cultural heritage. Although the association was founded by more senior people, it quickly attracted young enthusiasts eager to find a space to express themselves and contribute to the community in which they live. Our team consists of an interdisciplinary team of young experts from various fields such as architecture, museology,

sociology, archaeology, history and other related disciplines, and our activities focus on raising awareness about the importance of preserving, presenting and interpreting cultural and historical heritage, and its role in shaping the community. During our many years of activity, we organised numerous exhibitions, educational workshops, lectures, round tables and summer schools. We initiated interventions in the public space and other similar activities, in addition to starting or being part of numerous successful collaborations with organisations and other actors in the local and wider community. We are most proud of the initiative "We have the right to a museum!", launched with the aim of creating a city museum. It was successfully completed in 2014, when the museum was finally established, and the association has been cooperating and engaging synergistically from the very beginning, through public advocacy, and in dialogue with the institutions in charge.

Although we are a relatively small organisation with limited resources, through many years of work, experience and actively listening to the needs of the community we are part of, we have managed to establish ourselves as an important and influential actor in the field.

Similarly to Friends of Heritage, our partner, ARCHÉ Association, is a non-profit organisation that aims to increase community interest and engagement in cultural heritage issues. The organisation was founded in 2012 with a focus on built heritage and consists of a diverse team of young enthusiasts and experts from the fields of architecture, history and art history, social entrepreneurship, media and communication, and other related disciplines.

Since its beginnings, ARCHÉ has focused on international cooperation, exchange of experiences and building international connections and partnership networks. In 2017 the association became a member of Europa Nostra - a pan-European federation for cultural heritage, whose main activities focus on cultural heritage as a means to improve the life quality of people, and on acquiring the skills necessary for active and efficient participation in the process of making socially relevant decisions and policies.

ARCHÉ organises numerous capacity-building activities aimed at young people, such as interdisciplinary summer schools, workshops related to the making of documentary films, and debates involving various stakeholders of the local community. The target group of the mentioned activities are mostly young people between 14 and 19 years old.

Together, we have prepared a handbook derived from our pooled years of experience in the field of cultural heritage and work with young people. Thematically, the handbook is divided into two main units. The first includes the methodology of engaging young people through culture, while the second focuses on the process of creating solid partnerships, connections and networks.

## 1. Who Is This Handbook Intended For?

The handbook is intended for individuals and organisations that work with young people and for young people who want to get involved in, or create their own participative initiatives, regardless of the field of activity. The handbook can also serve as a starting point and a source of information for all young people who desire to engage, organise, express themselves or act on issues related to the needs of their community or the environment. They can also find out how to gather support and formulate proposals addressed to policy-makers in regard to decisions that shape their communities. In addition, the handbook can serve as a stimulating read for all those interested in working with young people or starting activities related to culture or other fields relevant for their community.

Given that culture is our primary focus, the content of this handbook might also be of interest to those already working in the field who want to break old patterns, working silos, or challenge ideas of cultural organisations and institutions as having boring, exclusive or old-fashioned approaches. This hand-

book may also be useful to anyone seeking socially relevant approaches and methods, or ways to create content that is interesting and relevant to an audience seen as co-creators, and not merely passive consumers.

Although this handbook is intended to serve a wide audience, we place a special focus on young people between the ages of 15 and 18, as this is an extremely important formative period. It is the moment when young people are faced with important and challenging decisions that will inform the rest of their adult lives, such as choosing a high school, a college or a profession. This is also the period when young people, upon reaching the age of 18, become full members of society and get to actively shape its future.

The following methodology is based on our own experiences as young people organised around a common goal, engaged in solving problems that we noticed at a given moment in our community. First, we clustered around more experienced colleagues who encouraged and guided us with their example. Eventually, thanks to their mentoring, we started acting independently and creating projects and activities, as well as impacting policies at the local level. Today, a significant part of our organisation is made up of young people. The

goal is to further increase their number by promoting and enabling active participation and providing the necessary resources.

## 2. Why Culture?

We have chosen culture as our starting point because of our familiarity with it, as well as for its enriching aspects. At the same time, our experience has made us aware of the faults and shortcomings of the cultural sector, which we believe could be improved by the active involvement of young people. Although at first glance it may seem that we are dealing with a relatively narrow part of culture (i.e. the issues of cultural heritage), when designing our activities and projects, we always start from the bigger picture and aim to understand how issues related to cultural heritage shape our present-day society and its habits. For us, culture and heritage are broad concepts that include the emotional, private and public experience of heritage in all its manifestations, whether cultural, historical, natural or other. Culture is the net that connects all members of a society. It has a great influence on the formation of personal, social, national or supranational identities. It creates a space for raising awareness about issues and an opportunity for active social participation. In addition, a large number of socially and historically important initiatives have originated in the sphere of culture.

Nevertheless, culture also has its weak points. Among them is the fact that some cultural organisations and institutions are still exclusively places of cultural consumption, instead of being spaces open to participation, co-creation, free expression, and co-existence of different socially relevant interpretations. This handbook aims to encourage thinking and acting so as to foster a different environment. It is important to point out that we believe in a holistic approach when it comes to the formation of the target audience in terms of the diversity of generations and ways of approaching topics. If not all categories are taken into account, then we can hardly talk about inclusion or expect active participation and action on the part of all social groups.

Although in our experience active participation does exist, social research on our current social climate indicates a lack of interest among young people in active participation in culture, and these findings have led us to use as a starting point the participation scale model developed by Roger Hart. It could be roughly divided into three

types of participation: consultative, collaborative and active. Consultative participation is characterised by a low level of active involvement and unequal cooperation; collaborative participation is characterised by a shift towards a higher level of involvement and a more equal cooperation as young people are given the opportunity to express their own needs and interests; but only active participation implies the equal cooperation and active participation of young people in shaping actions, strategies and policies for the community. Although the main goal of working with young people is active participation, we believe that it is important to take into account case studies where this goal has not yet been fully reached. This is why our handbook includes elements that can be useful regardless of the level of participation.

In the following, you will find a set of guidelines developed through the ENGAGE methodology through which we try to show how young people can self-organise into functional structures and shape relevant and impactful projects and programs on a local, regional and national level. The methodology was developed considering the dominant forms of project financing and planning.

## You ENGAGE!

This handbook will present the ENGAGE methodology which enables youth to participate in cultural and heritage projects. Following the six steps proposed in it, youth and youth workers can empower young people to actively participate and make independent decisions in their projects.

## 1. Encounter

The prejudice we often have towards young people is that they are uninterested and apathetic when it comes to important social and cultural issues. While their involvement is sought as part of social activism, their contribution is often deemed null. However, this could mostly be connected to the absence of plans and strategies related to youth work.

To actively involve young people in the work of an NGO, the first step would be to define a clear youth work policy in the form of a strategic document. Creating such a document will help clarify goals, plan activities and find a place for young people within the association. The preparation of

the document should be led by people with experience in working with young people. Alongside them, young people themselves should play an important role in drafting the strategic document. While creating this document, the NGO should have in mind projects that are primarily focused on their priorities and needs, as well as projects that enable the active participation and involvement of youth in co-creating policies.

Clearly defined goals and activities are the foundation for involving youth in project tasks. Youth need to be attracted and motivated, that is, encountered. It is important to know their needs and interests. Young people are the ones who best know their social group and can actively contribute to the formation of recruitment policy.

A clearly defined activity allows young people to assess their abilities and what is expected of them. Therefore, it is important to convey to young people their envisaged role in the project, as well as the knowledge and skills they will use and gain along the way. Certificates or other forms of extrinsic motivators can play an extra role in motivating young people. They should be

informed on how much time they will spend on that activity and how the NGO will handle basic needs and potential problems such as availability, transportation, food and drinks. When organising activities, it is important to maintain flexibility in order not to disrupt young people's schooling/leisure schedule.

Youth can be encouraged to participate in projects through advertising. Although young people rarely use traditional media such as local radio and newspapers, their parents do, and they can encourage them to participate. By placing posters and flyers in places where young people gather, you can briefly present the project idea to them in public spaces. In addition, using modern media such as social networks and other web tools, you can create content customised to their interests. Young people who are already involved in the work of the NGO can actively create digital content themselves, thus demonstrating the usefulness of the policy of involving young people in the work of the NGO.

In order to get in touch with youth, it is important to reach them in their safe zones. The youth base within the NGO can help in mapping out the locations where young people hang out (such as the city centre, shopping or recreation centres). If there is no youth base, local associations that work with youth can bridge the gap between the cultural/heritage NGO and the youth. A strong support of the NGO within the community also plays an important role. That way, parents and fellow citizens are confident in the NGO's work with young people.

## 2. Navigation

Once young people have agreed to get involved in the project, the process of defining the activities within the project can start. The entire project plan should be presented to the youth and should include a clearly defined role for the youth, as well as for the facilitator. During this step, youth will be allowed to define the problem/situation that they will solve within this project. Young people are the ones who should be allowed to make all the important decisions. The goal is to create an activity that will be in line with the experience that young people want to have and the skills and outcomes they want to achieve. Derived from the central idea of the strategic document, the project should be designed according to the priorities and needs of young people. Guided primarily by the base of young people in the project, as well as by relevant social research, it is necessary to define the specific needs of the community or group. The task of this phase is to define the problematic situation with youth and for the youth.

The task of the facilitator is to help the youth navigate this activity, noticing and submitting problems to their attention. The facilitators are in charge of assessing the needs, difficulty and complexity of the tasks, and of adapting them accordingly to the age, mental, educational and motivation level of the participants. Facilitators should not get overly involved in solving problems, but at the same time they should not allow

young people to aimlessly search for solutions they cannot find. Permitted interventions include: reframing questions, asking new questions, discussing with participants, supplying appropriate data, suggesting approaches to solving problems, closely monitoring activities. At this stage, facilitators can have conversations and readings to encourage young people to bring examples of articles, leaflets and works that inspired them. It is necessary to create a pleasant atmosphere for discussion, dialogue and constructive criticism. For the first project, young people should be helped to choose the problem that directly affects them, so that by solving that problem, they will reach a higher level of self-fulfilment and self-satisfaction. This can be later linked to a broader national or global problem.

The navigation phase should take place in their safe zone. These can be already established spaces they use every day. As back-up, the NGO can ensure the creation of such a space. It is encouraged to carry out this phase during several meetings so that youth have the time to think about the proposed issue and talk about it with people who are important to them. As the meetings progress, the meetings should become shorter and more focused until the problem that the youth will solve through their project is finally defined.

As part of this phase, youth will acquire competencies connected to personal and social well-being such as: con-

structive communication in different situations, tolerance, understanding of different points of view and feelings of empathy. Civic competencies related to knowledge of democracy and justice are also learned, as well as skills such as expressing willingness to solve problems of the local and wider community, critical reflection and creative participation in community activities.

## 3. Gathering Solutions

After the youth have defined a problem within their community that they want to approach, the phase of gathering solutions follows. Young people are encouraged to form plans that can contribute to solving the problem.

Facilitators who moderate meetings in this phase should be guided by the principles of information exchange, safety, fear reduction and allowing time for reflection. Young people should be helped to understand the defined issue, as well as local social context and history, so as to choose an adequate solution. Through interactive methods, they should be encouraged to find as many solutions as possible from various perspectives. It is recommended that youth are allowed to present their research on the work of other NGOs, national or local government institutions that have dealt with similar issues.

At this stage it is suggested to organise several meetings so that young people have the opportunity to think, process

information and come to conclusions. After brainstorming at the first meetings, further activities should be focused on narrowing down the number of options and choosing the final approach to solve the problem.

By studying current reality, young people become active researchers. In the process, they acquire knowledge, form personal attitudes, support their attitudes and opinions, ask questions, notice ambiguities and inconsistencies in presentations, actively listen to others and formulate quality feedback, talk and check whether others understand, learn not to attack the person but ideas, show openness of mind and sensitivity, learn that opinions should not be changed under the compulsion of the majority but based on logical argumentation, learn to respect their dialogue partners, realise that the result of their work is joint and not individual, learn how to present their solution to others.

By drawing a conclusion and deciding on an approach to the solution of the problem, the purpose, goals and strategy of that group are clearly defined. Consequently, the group acquires a shared sense of identity and belonging. The youth initiative is encouraged so that they build an understanding that with a healthy amount of effort, they can achieve above-average results.

## 4. Accumulating Resources

Once the main approach to problem-solving is established, youth should begin planning the necessary resources. This phase, like the previous two, also takes place in the form of meetings. Facilitators can use the conversation method to lead young people to think about the capacities needed to implement a solution. In this phase youth should create the schedule for the entire project, predict its duration and the material and staff support needed. By coming up with the final project schedule, plans are endowed with concrete steps, time table of activities and deadlines.

After defining what is needed for the project, youth can begin to assess available resources. Within the group, they should create a personal support plan and divide tasks among themselves depending on the interests, strengths and weaknesses of each individual. By assigning members to different work groups (such as research, execution, management, support etc.), organisational and team skills are strengthened, as well as coordination skills between different work groups. Considering the project schedule, each work group

should also assess the staff and material support needed within its team.

After assessing the needs of each work group, young people can start compiling a list of the necessary material resources. Simultaneously, participants should be reminded to consider the financial support needed, as well as products and services that could be rented from, or supplied by, the local government or other organisations and service providers. In order to obtain the necessary financial support, facilitators should encourage youth to submit their project to appropriate public calls and tenders launched by government institutions or other organisations at local, regional and national level. Facilitators must provide proper support in finding funding opportunities and filling out the documentation.

Youth should also be informed about potential partnerships with other organisations that have similar objectives, in order to obtain material and staff support. Partnerships are an excellent way to overcome the shortcomings of the group in terms of specific skills, information or knowledge.

Upon receiving the results of funding calls and/or tenders, the facilitators can encourage the teams to make an assessment and revision of the project schedule, adapting it to available resources.

## 5. Goal Fulfillment

After the appropriate preparation and redistribution of resources, youth starts to move towards the fulfilment of the goal. This is an opportunity for young people to present their previous work and to show themselves as active members of their community. Everything the young people have planned is now moving into the phase of implementation.

Before implementation, facilitators should go through the entire project schedule with the youth and, if necessary, explain everyone's role and ensure that all the questions are answered. At the same time, facilitators should work on the environment in which the young people will present their work. If possible, facilitators should convene a public that wants to hear about the opinions and activity of young people. They should also try to raise public awareness about involving young people in public policies. As members of the NGO, through their network, facilitators should strive to create a positive atmosphere in which youth can present their work and foster opportunities for further growth.

If the previous steps have been planned in detail, by now the youth are

self-organised in teams and acquainted with their duties and responsibilities. All teams are coordinated through teamwork and, if necessary, plans are adjusted for new and unplanned situations. Facilitators provide support at the request of young people and ensure that there are no potentially dangerous situations.

During the implementation of the project, youth acquire proactive project management skills and a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. Young people learn to work with others, as well as within and for society. In addition, they develop a sense of responsibility, understanding and respect for common values, all of which is necessary to ensure cohesion in the community.

## 6. Evaluation

Although we often put evaluation last, it should be carried out constantly and in parallel with all other phases. Throughout the implementation of the program, facilitators should monitor and evaluate their work with young people, as well as the work of young people themselves.

In addition, evaluations should also be carried out regularly by youth. A particularly important aspect to keep in mind is self-evaluation, which will show the progress and satisfaction of youth during the project. The goal of conducting evaluations throughout the project is to check the quality of the project, as well as the motivation of the participants. A feedback platform could also be established as a place where youth can send their thoughts and feedback over the course of the project. Constant evaluation makes it easier to make decisions when changes to the project schedule are necessary.

Apart from being carried out in parallel to the other phases, evaluation should also be implemented in the last stage of the project. In the final evaluation, all participants should reflect on whether their objectives have been met, as well as on the fulfilment of personal goals and desires related to the project. This is an opportunity to take a critical look at all the stages and aspects of the project and to draw conclusions that will contribute to work in other projects for both young people and facilitators. In this phase, young people have the opportunity to share their ideas for future projects that build up on the implemented work. As a deliverable/result of the evaluation, the group should create a final document for future reference.

By conducting a quality evaluation and

self-assessment, young people will gain a better insight into what has been done and set goals for future improvement. They will also feel more confident in their abilities, more valued and more motivated to learn new skills. Moreover, they will be encouraged to take responsibility and learn the importance of self-assessing their worth.

# SECTION 2: How to Engage Youth in Creating Successful Networks and Partnerships in Culture

In this handbook, strategies, resources and methodological approaches that enable individuals and organisations to establish connections and actively engage young people in diverse cultural initiatives are seen as playing a crucial role. The final goal is to spark creative processes in the minds of new generations, encouraging them to establish connections, cultivate networks and embark on collaborative initiatives. Physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes are at their peak in adolescence. Young people explore their independence and develop a sense of self, they become increasingly interested in what others think of them and how they are accepted in their peer/friends groups. They suffer if they feel excluded. In this context, it's crucial for experienced professionals supporting the development of cultural initiatives among young people to join forces and create a framework that transcends generational limits and connects with the stories and lived experiences of communities.

Projects and initiatives can have incredibly positive outcomes if they are developed and implemented in partnerships: effective collaboration improves overall performance. A partnership is an agreement to do something together benefitting all parties involved, bringing results that could not be achieved by a single part-

ner operating alone, and reducing duplication of efforts. A partnership is a collaborative relationship between two or more entities with shared interests, goals or objectives. It involves mutual trust and respect in order to achieve common outcomes, often leveraging the strengths and resources of each partner.

Partnerships, while invaluable, face significant hurdles that require careful consideration. Creating and maintaining partnerships demands hard work, dedication and commitment. Effective resource allocation, including financial and human capital, is vital for their success and longevity. Partnerships operate within unique local conditions shaped by complex societies, institutional frameworks, cultural contexts and nuances. In order to have a successful partnership, it is essential that these multifaceted elements be approached in a flexible, customised manner. Recognising and adapting to the specific challenges of a partnership highlights the importance of having a rich, in-depth insight and a contextual understanding of the partnership dynamics.

Results achieved from partnerships develop gradually over time, confirming the importance of patience and maintaining a long-term perspective.

# 1. The Importance of Partnerships in Cultural Youth Engagement

Collaboration allows for the exchange of knowledge, resources and expertise. It spurs innovation and contributes to growth and resilience. It extends outreach to diverse audiences, ensuring inclusivity, and creates networks that help navigate challenges more effectively. By pooling resources, partnerships contribute to the overall growth of the cultural sector, creating a vibrant environment that benefits both organisations and the communities they serve.

## 1.1. ADVANTAGES OF PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships play a pivotal role in cultural youth engagement, offering many advantages. From a financial standpoint, collaborative initiatives such as those facilitated by programs like Erasmus+ are encouraged due to their cost-sharing nature, enabling more efficient resource utilisation. The pooling of financial resources allows for the execution of vaster, more diverse and impactful cultural activities that might otherwise be financially challenging for a single entity to undertake.

Experience sharing is another critical aspect, as partnerships offer a platform for skill and perspective exchange. Collaborating with diverse entities introduces fresh approaches, enriching the learning environment for both organisations and young participants. In addition, exposure to varied points of view enhances cultural competencies and increases adaptability.

Cultural partnerships also ensure mutual understanding and appreciation by engaging with diverse communities and viewpoints, offering a better grasp of participants' cultural identity and heritage, and promoting trust and respect. Inclusivity is another significant advantage, as it extends cultural activities to diverse backgrounds, rendering them accessible to a wider audience.

Partnerships are beneficial for both institutions and young participants. Organisations can amplify their impact by pooling resources with partners, leading to more extensive cultural programs. For young individuals, partnerships provide opportunities for skill development, leadership roles, and access to broader networks, enabling them to actively contribute to cultural initiatives.

## 1.2. POTENTIAL DISADVANTAGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

In cultural youth partnerships, despite significant advantages, several potential obstacles can arise: the partnerships are difficult to set up and maintain, they require will and resources, and results may not be instant. It's crucial to address potential drawbacks through effective mitigation strategies that will ensure long-term success.

- **Coordination Challenges:** Coordinating diverse activities among partners can lead to inefficiency. Mitigation involves transparent communication, clearly defined roles and the use of project management tools.
- **Differing Objectives:** Misaligned goals among partners can hinder progress. Mitigation includes detailed goal-setting discussions at the start of the partnership and continuous evaluation and alignment.
- **Resource Imbalances:** Unequal distribution of resources is a risk. Mitigation involves transparent resource sharing and promoting equitable contributions.
- **Cultural Sensitivity Issues:** Misunderstandings can arise from cultural differences.Mitigation strategies in-

clude cultural competency training, open communication and fostering a shared understanding of cultural nuances.

- **Sustainability Concerns:** Maintaining long-term sustainability may be a challenge. Mitigation involves developing sustainability strategies, regular evaluations and a commitment to continuity and adaptability.
- **Legal and Ethical Considerations:** Navigating legal and ethical issues can be complex. Mitigation entails clarifying legal frameworks, adhering to ethical standards and seeking legal advice for regulatory compliance
- **Dependency Risks:** Overreliance on specific partners is a concern. Mitigation strategies involve collaborating with various entities and establishing contingency plans for partner transitions.
- **Evaluation and Measurement Challenges:** Measuring the impact of cultural initiatives presents challenges. Mitigation includes developing robust evaluation frameworks, incorporating key performance indicators and engaging in continuous feedback loops for improvement.

Implementing these strategies enables cultural youth partnerships to address potential drawbacks, build up resilience and adaptability in collaborative efforts, thereby maximising benefits and effectively managing challenges.

# 2. How to Create Successful Partnerships and How to Engage Youth in This Process

Partnerships play a central role in the success of cultural initiatives, especially those involving youth. Multiple strategies exist for establishing mutually beneficial collaborations with the help of young people. Focusing on the experiences and methodology of ARCHÉ, an organisation dedicated to cultural youth engagement, one can explore the complexities of creating and maintaining partnerships while highlighting the importance of youth participation.

## 2.1. THE ARCHÉ MODEL: A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

The involvement of young people in culture demands more than a theoretical framework. It combines input from academic knowledge with actual results and requires a nuanced understanding of real-world scenarios in diverse circumstances. ARCHÉ's collaborative experience in youth engagement for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage provides insights into very precise aspects of how successful partnerships are designed and work. This knowledge is derived from the lessons learned from eight different projects and initiatives implemented in the past couple of years.

- **Lunaesthetic - Heritage, Community, Belonging (2023)** was dedicated to heritage and enthusiasts in related fields: history, architecture, restoration, art, landscape design, ecology, tourism. The project aimed to develop the capacity of future specialists in heritage, members of local community, owners of the historic park of the former Teleki aristocratic estate, and of local authorities in Luna de Jos, Cluj County, with the ultimate goal of conserving, restoring and sustainably valorizing built and landscape heritage. By involving recognized specialists such as architects, archaeologists, landscape designers, arboriculturists and stone restorers, the project facilitated the dissemination of internationally used tools, specific to each scientific field involved in the complex process of restoring mon-

uments and historical ensembles. From 24 July 2023 to 03 August 2023, the Teleki Castle Ensemble in Luna de Jos hosted the summer school that included cultural events, artistic moments, fresh ideas and more. A space for dialogue between young people and renowned professionals was created, removing intergenerational barriers between different professional categories. The Teleki Castle Ensemble in Luna de Jos, consisting of a Hunting Tower and the castle's park, was meticulously analysed and researched in order to develop sustainable and state-of-the-art strategies for the valorisation of cultural heritage. The summer school consisted of two main practical workshops:

**(1) Arboriculture:** the historical compositional elements still present on the site were identified; theoretical and practical elements specific to the management of trees in the restrictive context of a historical park-monument were covered through applied activities of digital inventory, diagnosis, maintenance and landscape analysis;

**(2) Archaeology**: the results obtained from the non-invasive pre-

liminary research, namely aerial and underground scans, were interpreted; archaeological excavations were carried out in the surrounding area of the Hunting Tower in order to recover material that could be used in the future restoration.

In addition, each day included presentations and dialogues on historic gardens, restoration, architecture, biodiversity, LiDAR and SLAM scanning technologies, and cultural events such as classical music recitals or an equestrian demonstration.

- ***Agora Cișmigiu - Heritage Field School* (2022)** contributed to intergenerational dialogue, learning and shared experiences. Together, we explored innovative approaches to strengthen our Europe-wide network of young heritage professionals, students and volunteers.

*Taking Action: Youth and Heritage* was an open discussion between established and emerging heritage professionals addressing the challenges faced by young professionals in the heritage sector. Additional activities, such as a heritage tour of Bucharest's most iconic buildings and places, and a guided tour of the historical Cișmigiu Garden, were also highly interactive. The participants learned historical facts about the city, stories about historical

monuments and notions of landscape design. Afterwards, a hands-on gardening workshop in Cișmigiu Garden and a workshop that explored the main advocacy tools, skills and methodologies for local initiatives took place. All the activities were done keeping in mind the need for interactions with local authorities aimed at strengthening the connection between residents and their city.

- ***The Days of Balneary Architecture in Govora*** **(2020-2021)** The town of Băile Govora has appeared and evolved within a unique natural setting, building upon the thermal springs present in the area. The central nucleus is the historic park, hosting the main spa building and the Casino. In time, the town developed around it, consisting of elite villas, shops and vernacular houses that harmoniously blend Western architecture with local construction techniques. These elements created a cultural landscape that constitutes a representative example of a thermal town at the meeting point of East and West.

The project focused on education and engaging participants of all ages, targeting the local community, local authorities and the owners of historical buildings as primary beneficiaries. It also involved tourists, residents of nearby cities and employees of her-

itage protection institutions. The initiative began with a round-table discussion on heritage as a resource for sustainable development, with local and regional stakeholders. This resulted in a plan to protect and revitalise valuable buildings, essential for the future Local Development Strategy. Subsequently, a week-long event was organised featuring interdisciplinary workshops, exhibitions, guided tours and lectures meant to raise awareness of built heritage values and encourage community involvement. Informal storytelling evenings provided a platform for dialogue on local identity, centred around historical buildings. These stories were collected to create a digital tour on an app. Additionally, with the help of young volunteers, experts and craftsmen, a historic gazebo was restored using traditional techniques and materials, serving as a model of best practices within the community.

- ***The Future is Heritage*** **(2020-2021)** aimed to bring together students, young professionals, volunteers and enthusiasts in the field of cultural heritage, promoting an intergenerational and interdisciplinary exchange of experiences. The aim was to improve professional and personal skills, increase awareness of the heritage theme and establish a European network for young profes-

sionals in the sector. The resulting international platform encourages knowledge exchange across generations and active youth involvement in heritage policies and projects. ARCHÉ's project team, with support from partners in the Netherlands, co-organized the Heritage Field School in October 2021, held on the Dutch Waterline. The outcomes were showcased at the European Cultural Heritage Summit organised by Europa Nostra, representing Romania at European heritage forums.

An important part of the project was making heritage accessible to the public (through webinars and social media interactions) and engaging non-specialists with the cultural significance of heritage. These webinars covered various themes such as heritage and tourism, heritage and communities, social inclusion and redevelopment, and attracted participants from over 20 countries worldwide.

- ***Teen Talks: Heritage Edition*** **(2019)** was a creative workshop for young people on the topic of Dobrogea's cultural heritage. Heritage isn't just about the past, it shapes our present and lays the groundwork for the future. It is important to recognize heritage as a vital resource for prosperous and democratic societies, and it's essential for youth to have an influence on decisions

in this field. During the workshops, participants learned about contemporary methods of valuing heritage and worked in teams to implement their ideas. The project not only shifted their perspective on culture, but also empowered them to contribute to positive change in their city and region, imagining a more culturally respectful Constanța and Dobrogea.

- ***Cultural Heritage Through the Lens: My First Documentary Film*** **(2019)** was part of an initiative to establish an informed community dedicated to preserving cultural heritage for future generations in Constanța. The initiative focused on the nomination of the Constanța Casino in the The 7 Most Endangered Programme run by Europa Nostra. Considering the conservation constraints of the monument (which could not be visited at the time) the project team aimed to create community reactivation through education. My First Documentary Film was a summer-long workshop for high school students that taught them the basics of filming techniques, editing and documentary filmmaking. The event had three sessions and a final event, which allowed both spectators and young documentary-makers to watch the films they had created projected

against the impressive background of the Constanța Casino. All video materials were subtitled in English for an international audience.

- ***Talkfest Garden* (2019)** consisted of several cultural events meant to discuss and enhance the role of built heritage in the development directions of Prahova county. During a professional debate on the integration of cultural initiatives in the area, the Cantacuzino Florești Foundation presented its activity as an example of how to reactivate a space in an economically and culturally disadvantaged area, while contributing to the inclusion of young people in the local and regional artistic and cultural life. Another event was a picnic in the garden of an unused building in the town of Sinaia, with a strong focus on the emotional memory of the place, that of a former kindergarten. The space was later revitalised through a construction workshop and through The Mountain Dreaming event, which was part of the Sinaia Forever Festival and was organised by young people for young people and their city. The project team offered logistical support and oversaw the actions of volunteers from the local highschool.

- ***The Invisible Casino and mAPP My Europe (2018-2019)*** exemplify best practices at national and international levels, within complex activities and a focus on the legacy of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage, an unprecedented celebration of our shared cultural heritage and values. As part of the initiative, various activities were undertaken in order to engage young people. A series of workshops and a "public café debate" for high school students were organised in Constanța. In workshops, discussions revolved around themes such as: "Heritage: Community or Archive Dust?", "Cultural Heritage Enhanced Through Art Projects and New Technologies", "The Invisible Casino - The Power of Storytelling in Community Activation". Lecturers specialised in cultural heritage, new media techniques and storytelling facilitated the discussions that explored past, present and future interpretations of heritage. Youth-led actions and activities echoed the views of established professionals, advocating for the Constanța Casino to be seen as an important place of local memory, a national cultural symbol and a valuable asset, rather than a burden. This project highlighted the ongoing development of an informed and

engaged community, particularly among the younger generation, who increasingly recognize the importance of cultural heritage as a national and international identity resource. This initiative could serve as a blueprint for cultural revitalization efforts for other Romanian buildings with similar historical significance, such as Băile Herculane, Vatra Dornei, Eforie, Govora etc.

## 2.2. A SIX STEP MODEL ANYONE CAN USE

When forming partnerships, ARCHÉ follows a comprehensive six-steps approach, from partner identification to continuous communication. This can be perceived as a precise roadmap for organisations aiming to enhance their efficiency and impact. Particularly noteworthy is the commitment to connections on a personal level and the importance of one-on-one interactions in creating deep and meaningful relations.

### 1. Partner Identification

ARCHÉ's approach to partnership creation involves a proactive pursuit of potential stakeholders, including government bodies, cultural institutions, educational organisations, local businesses, youth organisations and community groups. The focus is on broadening the reach of cultural initiatives beyond the usual spheres, expanding to youth engagement and community development, forming a comprehensive and interconnected network. In the framework of all the above-mentioned projects, formal partnerships were established after the identification of potential partners among international, national, regional and local stakeholders, and this diverse pool of potential collaborators ensured a rich exchange of perspectives and expertise.

### 2. Customised Proposals and Project Goals

Writing proposals involves breaking down the larger vision into manageable, achievable tasks. It's about showing how each piece of the puzzle

contributes to the bigger picture. This inspires confidence in the feasibility of the plan, and provides a clear scenario for implementation.

For example, to strengthen the exchange of best practices, customised proposals were developed and presented to specialists in different cities and museums (The National Museum of Transylvanian History, Cluj-Napoca; The National Museum of the Union, Alba Iulia; The County Museum, Satu Mare) in order to attract them to join the Lunaesthetic project.

Talkfest Garden was created to be a model for reactivating economically and culturally disadvantaged areas. One of the main goals was to integrate young people into the local and regional artistic and cultural life by establishing strong partnerships with: AICI Architecture Studio, Vira Association, ViraFilms, Sinaia City Hall, Carmen Sylva Cultural Center, Mihail Cantacuzino College Sinaia, Cantacuzino Florești Foundation, The Order of Architects - Prahova Branch, Ghirlande Luminoase and 50(Super(Real)), a Spanish studio focused on multi-scalar spatial strategies.

Customised proposals were developed to align with the objectives of The Future is Heritage and Agora Cișmigiu - Heritage Field School projects. Both aimed to strengthen the European network of young heritage professionals, students and volunteers, fostering international collaborations.

## 3. Engaging Educational Institutions

Engaging educational institutions means creating collaborative partnerships with academic entities such as universities, schools and educational organisations. This strategic approach aims to integrate educational resources, expertise and student involvement into cultural initiatives, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between cultural projects and the academic community.

The projects implemented in Constanța County are a relevant example. Teen Talks: Heritage Edition, Cultural Heritage Through the Lens: My First Documentary Film, The Invisible Casino and mAPP My Europe engaged highschool students in interactive workshops and even in a summer-long program. Some of the most important partners were: Constanța County Student Council, The “Ovidius” University, “Teodor T. Burada” Constanța County Cultural Center , “Jean Constantin” Multifunctional Educational Center for Youth etc.

## 4. Community Involvement

Community involvement is a central aspect of cultural partnerships, highlighting the active engagement of civil society and unstructured citizen groups in the planning and execution of cultural initiatives. This collaborative approach ensures that cultural projects resonate authentically with the diverse needs, aspirations and cultural identities of the community, fostering a sense of inclusivity and shared ownership.

Through collaborative team-based activities conducted in workshops, young people actively contributed with innovative ideas for the valorization of cultural heritage in the Talkfest Garden project. This approach not only facilitated a meaningful engagement with the cultural initiative, but also inspired in youth a sense of responsibility towards, and belonging to, their city. The project also included the participation of people with disabilities, which added new and unique contributions to the cultural discourse.

In Lunaesthetic active community engagement formed a central pillar, involving local youth in hands-on activities such as tree pruning and archaeological excavations.

Involving young people in local communities taps into their diverse perspectives, innovative ideas and technological savviness to address local challenges, explore new opportunities, and foster innovation and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

## 5. Government Collaboration

The collaboration with governmental entities represents a major step towards efficiency and strategic congruence. This requires synchronising projects with governmental priorities, securing support and navigating regulatory frameworks. By nurturing collaboration with government entities, cultural organisations can access additional resources, broaden community impact and improve the sustainability of their efforts through shared policies and aligned objectives.

Many of ARCHÉ's projects - Lunaesthetic, The Days of Balneary Architecture in Govora, Talkfest Garden, Agora Cișmigiu - were made possible by fruitful collaborations with government bodies, specifically City Halls, intro-

duced from the very beginning in the projects.

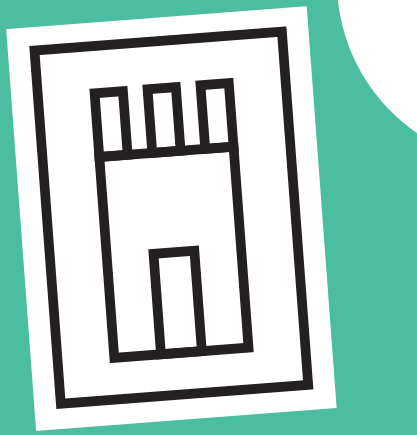
Moreover, ARCHÉ has a multi-annual strategic partnership with The National Heritage Institute in Romania, which ensures constant scientific support and collaboration in heritage preservation efforts.

## 6. Continuous Communication

Maintaining open and transparent communication channels with all the partners and stakeholders, regardless of their roles and responsibilities, is essential throughout the projects and even beyond their formal end. Understanding the way the others act, providing regular updates, seeking feedback and addressing concerns promptly ensures that all involved parties remain informed and engaged.

In conclusion, the longevity of partnerships relies on several crucial factors: properly researching potential partners, identifying shared goals and values, establishing clear and consistent communication channels, regularly evaluating impact and nurturing personal connections.

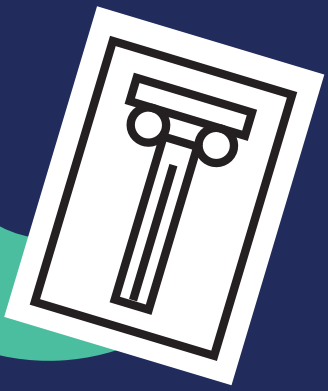
Young people have the potential to make a meaningful impact, so it is crucial to create platforms where their voices can be heard, to align collaboration opportunities with their interests, and to advocate for giving them opportunities to contribute at the decision-making processes. Partnerships can ensure they have the necessary networks, frameworks, support and access to resources to make a difference and leave their mark on the world with passion and purpose.



ENGAGIN
YOUTH IN
CULTURE

Ines Vasile
Alexandra Craciun
PRIJATELJI BAŠTINE
AMICI HEREDITATIS
AMICI HEREDITATIS

# SECTION 3: From methodology to practical example



In order to ensure the success of the ENGAGE methodology, ARCHÉ and Friends of Heritage tested it on five young people from Croatia and five young people from Romania, as part of the How to Engage Youth in Culture project. In charge of testing were facilitators from the two partner associations.

Due to the nature of the project, the testing had its limitations. Firstly, it was not possible to encounter the young people as recommended by this handbook, as their participation had to be approved by their school or their parents. Therefore, the group did not form organically. Moreover, the length of the stay of the Romanian students was limited, which led to a predetermined activities' schedule, so the evolution of the project was not as intuitive and flexible as desired in the handbook. Nevertheless, we tried to follow the steps of the methodology as closely as possible, in order to obtain authentic and accurate results. Furthermore, the testing was conducted in "Ivan Švear" High School in Ivanić-Grad, Croatia, in a formal learning environment, which might have induced an aversion towards activities on the part of participants.

# 1ST DAY OF TESTING

## Encounter

Given that the young people were pre-selected by the Romanian association ARCHÉ and the Croatian association Friends of Heritage, the first step of the ENGAGE methodology called encounter was carried out before the first day of testing. However, considering that the group of young people did not come together naturally, this step was adapted so as to provide them with an opportunity to get to know each other, bond and build mutual trust. As part of the introduction, a brief research into the expectations of participants was carried out through the interactive application Mentimeter, which allowed them to monitor their answers live and discuss them. This also allowed the project team to do an initial evaluation of the project.

## Navigation

After the initial introduction and evaluation, the second step of the ENGAGE methodology began. Given the time constraints, the youth were given a key question to help them focus their project. The question directed them towards creating a project related to engaging youth in culture in Ivanić-Grad.

The young people from Croatia introduced their colleagues from Romania to the cultural atmosphere in Ivanić-Grad, so they could more easily understand and define the needs of the community. The young people also used the Internet to conduct research and find out about the cultural offer of the town, as well as about its shortcomings. After analyzing the cultural needs of Ivanić-Grad and those of young people, the participants were directed towards a discussion on how to solve them. During the discussion, they wrote down the most interesting ideas.

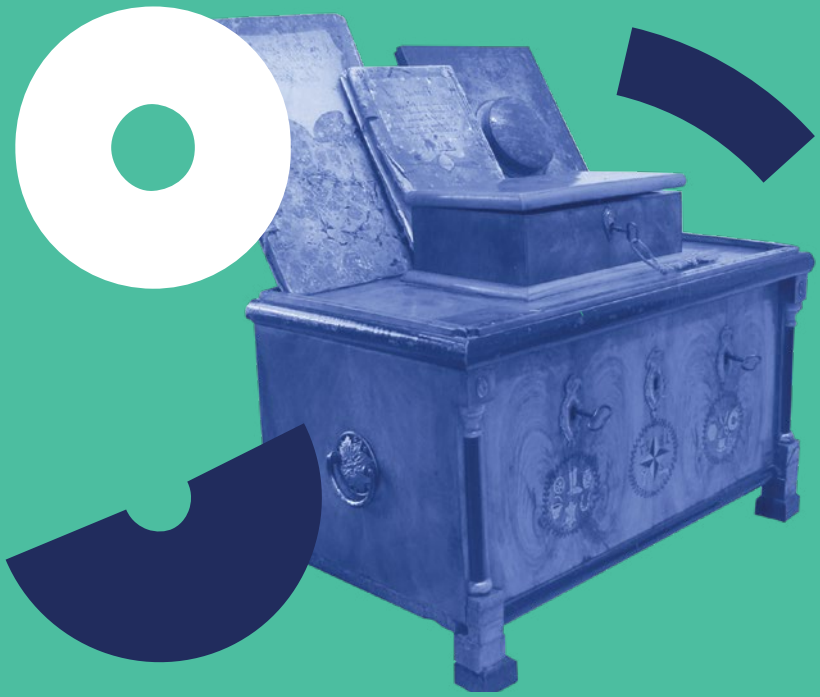
When the facilitators felt that the young people were starting to form coherent ideas around a focal point, they were encouraged to share their project proposals through the Mentimeter application. In a final joint decision, the participants defined the solution of involving young people in culture in Ivanić-Grad through a music festival with street art elements. The idea of the project came as a response to the absence of such events in Ivanić-Grad, while the Romanian group stated this

kind of festival as a good practice example in their city of Ploieşti, Romania.

## Gathering Resources

After they successfully defined the project they wanted to carry out, the young people started thinking about gathering resources. During the implementation of this step, they were divided into two work groups, each group consisting of both young people from Croatia and Romania. In order to direct them to define the activities and resources necessary for the implementation of the project, the key question was: What are the solutions to your project? Within their groups, the participants approached ways of conducting their own music festival. As needed, the facilitators were also involved in the discussion, asking questions related to the feasibility of their ideas and encouraging them to think about their project in more detail.

After the first clearly defined ideas began to appear, the young people were directed to create a final activity plan for the project. With the help of this plan, the participants could start the



process of listing the resources needed to carry out the activities. In addition, it was important to point out that they should also think about human resources and potential partnerships. Furthermore, they were directed to think about ways of disseminating their project.

As part of this activity, the youth from Croatia decided to take their colleagues from Romania for a walk around the city in order to find the most suitable places for their project.

Once they had clearly defined ideas, the young people were encouraged to create their own mind maps through the interactive application Mindmeister and thus visualize their project more easily. At the end of the day, the participants had a clear idea of their project, its implementation and necessary resources, everything systematized using digital tools.

## 2ND DAY OF TESTING

Following the instructions in the handbook, the second day was designed as a small break from planning the project. This gave the participants the opportunity to think about their project in a somewhat more informal environment. They could also comment, evaluate and validate their ideas by discussing them with each other and people they were familiar with.

The goal of the second day was to introduce young people to examples of

best practices of youth involvement in the creation of cultural projects. The workshop was led by Iva Silla, an experienced interpreter and creator of gamified tours through Zagreb, Croatia. The theme of the workshop was Gamification. The workshop offered a playful approach to the process of learning about heritage. The participants had the opportunity to create their own gamified tour following the instructions and directions of the workshop leader. By applying game elements and principles to non-game contexts, the participants learned to make heritage sites more appealing to an audience.

This activity provided the necessary time for young people to consider their own project and it showed them alternative ways of involving young people in culture. In addition, this activity served as an opportunity for team building.

## 3RD DAY OF TESTING

### Accumulating Resources

On the third day, the young people returned to their work groups. They started the day by reviewing their mind maps and revising them in case they had new ideas or insights from the previous day. After reviewing the project plan, they started working on submitting the project to a public call announced by the Zagreb County in order to secure the necessary financial resources.

In the application form, the participants had to clearly formulate the concept, goals, activities, target audience and financial plan of the project. This required them to accurately describe and formulate, for the first time, the plans that they had previously mapped. It was also a way of showing young people what the project application process looks like, should they ever decide to do it through an organization.

### Goal Fulfillment and Evaluation

Given that the project was limited to the duration of the Handbook Pilot Training with Youth activity, the actual implementation of the planned project couldn't take place. Nevertheless, young people were introduced to the project implementation process and the best tools for mutual communication and coordination.

Afterwards, they had the opportunity to fill out the Report form for the Zagreb County public call. In doing this, they had the opportunity to think about and evaluate their own project. Notably, they pointed out some mistakes with the project activities and made financial plans.

The final activity in the Handbook Pilot Training with Youth was the evaluation of the entire training. Young people filled out a form evaluating the testing process. The evaluation form showed that participants understood the main goal of the project, that they got to know each other and their cultures. Over half of them showed enthusiasm about participating in future cultural projects by ARCHÉ and Friends of Heritage. Their responses also show that they started to think about engaging in culture:

> ***It made me realize that young people don't really know much about culture anymore, so it is important to start engaging them more.***

> ***It made me understand more about being engaged in culture by giving me the chance to create my own cultural project.***

Afterwards, they provided their concluding thoughts in Mentimeter by listing three things they learned during

this testing. Their most frequent responses were: *culture, history, organization, how to make a project, ways to engage with culture.*

## Results

The young people divided into two mixed groups of Romanians and Croatians created two projects with the same goal: the organization of a multi-day street art and music festival. (They named the festivals "ModernHeritage Fest" and "heArt of culture festival".) In both projects, they included workshops related to culture, such as a traditional dance workshop, embroidery making workshop, street art workshops with heritage motifs etc. They believed that such projects are best for attracting young people to cultural events and to NGOs working in culture.

This Handbook Pilot Training with Youth showed that young people are capable of designing their own project in culture with the help of facilitators. Moreover, it showed that youth are more enthusiastic if they are the ones making decisions and leading the processes. Ultimately, they are the ones who know best what the needs of youth are and how to engage them in culture. It is important to mention that, during the testing, the ideas about how to involve young people in heritage through cultural projects varied greatly among the young people and the facilitators (aged 25+). In conclusion, the testing served as a learning method to both the young participants and the facilitators: young people learned how to design and plan their own project, while facilitators learned about possible ways of engaging young people in culture.

# Handbook Reviews

*„Handbook titled How to Engage Youth in Culture is the result of a partnership between the Croatian association Friends of Heritage and the Romanian organization ARCHÉ. It is based on examples and practical experience of active youth engagement in the field of culture. It presents and tests the 6-step ENGAGE methodology which enables youth to participate at the highest level in cultural and heritage projects. The handbook highlights the active and creative methods of including young people in the process of starting and promoting engagement in cultural projects, also presenting possibilities for developing partnerships and networks. It aims specifically at young people, but also at a wide range of profit and non-profit organizations interested in supporting active youthwork.“*

Maja Cepetić Rogić, PhD in History of Art, Croatia

*„This handbook is the result of the collaboration between the Croation association Friends of Heritage and the Romanian association ARCHÉ. Drawing from their years of experience in engaging young people in culture, the handbook offers a methodology for creating youth-driven projects (i.e. projects designed and implemented by young people) in accordance with their needs and aspirations. The handbook also offers a methodology for developing partnerships, connections and networks, in order to enable professionals working with young people in culture to join forces and create a framework that transcends generational limits and connects with the lived experiences of communities.“*

Freelance writer from Romania

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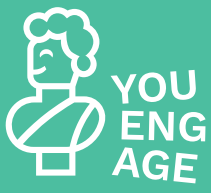
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