

Example Logo



Community Arts Projects and Seniors

1. Project Relevance

With regard to empowerment and participation, this project that takes place as a collaboration between an elders retirement home and a community arts group scores very high. Although the idea belonged to tangaProject, all the other decisions were taken in full collaboration between the tangaProject members

Project name: Vârsta 4 (4th Age)

Coordinating organisation: tangaProject, partner: "Amalia și dr. Moses Rosen" Retirement Home

Countries involved: Romania

Types of organisations involved: Group of artists, retirement home

Implementation level: Local level

Website: <http://www.varstapatru.blogspot.com/> (in Romanian)

and the residents. The main objectives of the project (as viewed and established by tangaProject) are: enriching the residents' lives, raising their self-esteem and self-confidence, activating their lives by involving them in educational and cultural activities, using their knowledge and skills to enrich other people's lives as well, and raising the community's awareness and openness towards elders. The more specific objectives are established by mutual agreement between the residents and tangaProject. Each "side" can propose new ideas and activities, but they make decisions together. One of the effects of this way of doing things is that there are no long-term objectives (other than the general ones) – the project will last only as long as both sides wish it to last. Continuity is, thus, one of the aspects aimed at by the tangaProject members, who work as volunteers in this project. Vârsta 4 is a relevant case in the context of the ASLECT project, because it is based on the same principles and values of empowerment and participation. However, Vârsta 4 is a local project targeting a small group of people (the residents of "Amalia și dr. Moses Rosen" Retirement Home, one of the many retirement homes in Bucharest), showing an interesting dimension in cultural and educational terms; also, it is a potential case to be multiplied by cultural operators and/or artistic groups. In terms of beneficiaries, the members of tangaProject addressed an already formed group of people: in order to reach their target group, they made a cooperation proposal to the Retirement Home.

2. Background and Aims

The "Amalia și dr. Moses Rosen" Retirement Home is a retirement home of the Jewish community in Bucharest, while tangaProject is a group of artists specialised in community theatre. They don't have a legal statute and they got involved in this project as volunteers. One of the members has an association which he uses when needed (in order to enter into partnership contracts, for example). The project has no involvement with public authorities, and it only depends on the agreement between the participants.

In Romania, elders are not usually engaged as active participants in cultural and educational projects; this is one of the aspects that Vârsta 4 tried to change, to the advantage of both the residents of the retirement home and the members of tangaProject. The benefits gained by the young people by means of involving themselves in Vârsta 4 are numerous: they learn new perspectives on their history and on life in general, they receive feedback on their abilities and skills, they gain knowledge, they engage in personal development, they gain professional experience. These benefits can also be brought to attention, as the other side of the learning process. Another important goal of Vârsta 4 is raising the community's awareness on different issues concerning elders. Most importantly, Vârsta 4 reaches out to a

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specific category of elders who are in dire need of communication, activity, information, and opportunities to participate.

3. Description of the Target Groups

The target group was comprised of the “apt” residents of the "Amalia și dr. Moses Rosen" Retirement Home (out of a total of 100 elders, around 70 seniors were able to involve themselves actively in the project, and 60 of them did so). The residents had rather a few connections with the “outside world”; they mostly considered themselves as having nothing more to offer to the world, while the world had only a few new things for them to discover. They knew each other and formed a community inside the retirement home. They found out about the project when the manager and the tangaProject team came to ask them if they would like to get involved in it.

4. Outputs and Multiplying Outcomes

The project’s outputs are the activities *per se* (which are numerous and varied) and the awareness residents get from outside the retirement home. The information regarding the activities performed through the project can be found on the project’s internet blog - administered by one of the residents - and in various publications (both on paper and virtual) and videos. *Vârsta 4* received a lot of interest and praise from the society (a lot of media coverage – for example, an interview with the leader of tangaProject in *Vârsta 4* was broadcasted on the national television channel). However, its example hasn’t been yet replicated elsewhere, to our knowledge, but the group of artists is willing to share their experience and pass on their expertise.

5. Impact and Sustainability

The impact of this project is significant, at its own level of implementation. It reached about 86% of its target group and it received a lot of attention from the media and from different organisations and individuals (the fact that some other young people offered to volunteer is more proof in this respect). In terms of its multiplication potential, questions have to be answered about the necessity of having similar conditions – like dealing with a group of seniors that are brought together before the start of the project.

As the work is carried out only by volunteers, one could think about continuity and sustainability of the action. In the case of this particular project, recruiting and training new volunteers are key factors and “a must” for it to continue and to maintain its good results. The action is getting now into a new phase of knowledge-transfer, for the declared purpose of encouraging a multiplication of the approach.

5. Educational Process

The activities developed within the project make use of various methods; interaction, participation, story-telling, brain-storming, description, negotiation, cooperation were used depending on the situation. Both seniors and younger people have ideas, present them in front of each other, together they reach a conclusion with regard to the possibility of turning such ideas into an activity, and all of them do their best to reach their goals. It is a two-way learning process, personalized and based on free will.

If necessary, the members of tangaProject and the employees of the retirement home appeal to other organizations and/or individuals to receive support for specific activities, sometimes by establishing short-term partnerships.

Project evaluation is mostly qualitative, based on the residents’ personal opinions and the public’s reaction (in the case of theatre performances, for example). TangaProject is documenting the process and the activities, creating an internal archive in order to make sure that knowledge can be transferred to other organizations, volunteers and collaborators.