



**YO.US.T.A.R.**  
INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 2

## DESIGN OF YO.US.T.A.R. Toolkit

YOUTH WORKERS USING THEATRE AUGMENTING CREATIVITY  
Project No. 2020-1-IT03-KA227-YOU-020563  
Final version



MIR Akademien



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# Introduction

The YO.US.T.A.R. “Youth workers Using Theatre Augmenting cReativity project” has been developed in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme by 7 EU youth organisations.

The project aims to increase the social inclusion of young people through theatre and creativity, based on the European values of acceptance and tolerance, and to promote intercultural dialogue represented by the Greek myths of Antigone and Aeneas. Furthermore, YO.US.T.A.R. wishes to offer young people a space to use theatre to foster self-esteem, self-awareness and confidence.

Finally, YO.US.T.A.R. aims to provide staff - working with young people in theatres and NGOs - with a set of tools that will enable them to better understand their audience and increase their professional skills in the field of art and social inclusion.

All partner organisations will develop and share best practices from their countries and from their previous experience to produce the final project outputs (toolbox, recommendations, literature review and methodological framework) that can be used across Europe.

The current social instability caused by the ongoing health crisis due to Covid-19 has subsequently increased disparities and social exclusion of the weakest groups, including young people.

Therefore, innovative and creative responses are required, such as YO.US.T.A.R. theatre workshops which could offer a simple but effective tool to foster new opportunities and new competences for both trainers/facilitators working with young people and young people themselves.



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The project includes different theatre techniques and guarantees high quality and highly relevant results, produced thanks to the input of the partner organisations, each of which contributes with their own knowledge and experience related to theatre for social inclusion of young people.

More specifically, the IO2 aims to pilot the YO.US.T.A.R. method in all partner countries after the release of the drafted Toolkit and the participation of theatre staff and youth workers to the C1 (Train-The-Trainers) in Italy.

The youth workers from all partner organisations who participated in the C1 in Palermo then carried out 7 workshops with 30 participants in their country, each reaching a total of 210 youngsters with fewer opportunities.

Trainers in each partner country oversaw the implementation of the workshops with youngsters, using the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology developed in the draft of the Toolkit. IO2 is then a Toolkit for trainers/facilitators/theatre staff working with youth using YO.US.T.A.R. methodology.

This output is a user guide that includes training videos and contents from previous YO.US.T.A.R. workshops (made by Teatro alla Guilla).

This YO.US.T.A.R. toolkit will guide trainers/youth workers/NGO staff through all the steps (including preparation, ethics and single sessions) needed to prepare and implement a seven-day YO.US.T.A.R. theatre workshop.

Made by and for trainers, it is an output founded on participatory theatre techniques for social inclusion and it is a transferable output.



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It is highly innovative in its opening up of a space within which practicing theatre and contact improvisation can enable communication, self-esteem, self-awareness and new skills in youngsters. It can have high impact potential in its simplicity, its transferability and its relevance to theatre staff, youth workers and.

This output also takes into consideration the results of IO1, completing the Toolkit with research and theatre practice from Literature Review and elements from the Methodological Framework.

The IO2 is divided in different chapters:

- Results from the C1 and participants' feedback;
- Preparation of the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop;
- Ethical aspects when implementing the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop;
- The YO.US.T.A.R. method: content, methodologies and techniques of the YO.US.T.A.R. sessions;
- Results from the pilot sessions in all partner countries;
- Conclusions.



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## Results from the training in Palermo and participants' feedback

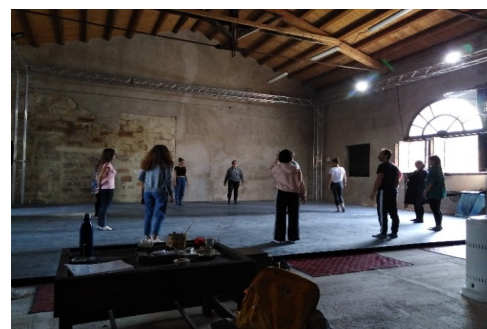
An important step of the YO.US.T.A.R. project was the training activity organised in Palermo from the 1st to the 5th of November 2021. During the training, partners' staff had the opportunity to experience Teatro alla Guilla theatre methods for working with youth.

A final performance with all participants sealed a challenging but positive experience shared by theatre practitioners in Palermo.

The training was held at Area Madera, a theatre devoted to artistic residencies now opening in Palermo.

A video on the training sessions based on Antigone's Greek drama developed by Teatro alla Guilla is available here:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=281197310605116>



Eighteen participants from all partners (3 people per partner) attended the training course and staged a final performance created during the workshop/training as programmed by the method used since 2016 by Teatro alla Guilla with young people and youth workers.

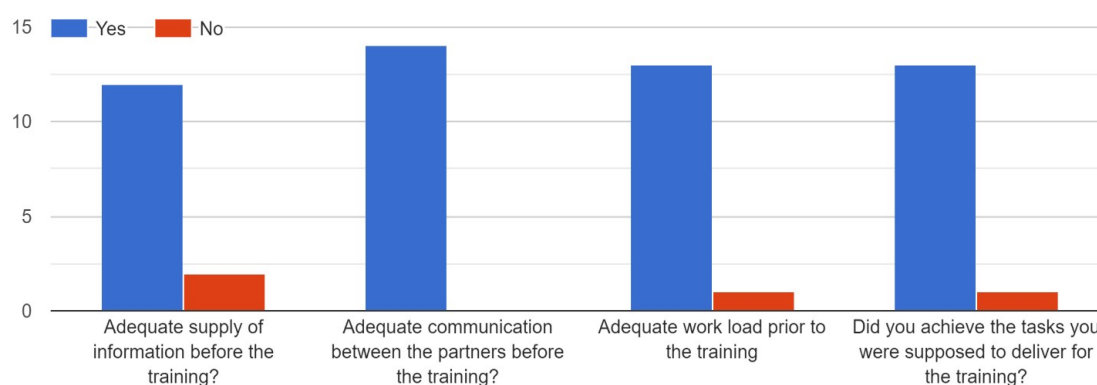
A questionnaire was distributed at the end of the LTTA in Palermo to collect feedback from the participants.

The idea was to give a picture of the feelings, emotions, impressions generated by the training and to gather information on the applicability of the method to other target groups, other than youth and youth workers.

Following are the results from the collected questionnaires: fourteen respondents left their comments.

First question was about preparation and overall participants were quite satisfied with it.

#### Preparatory work





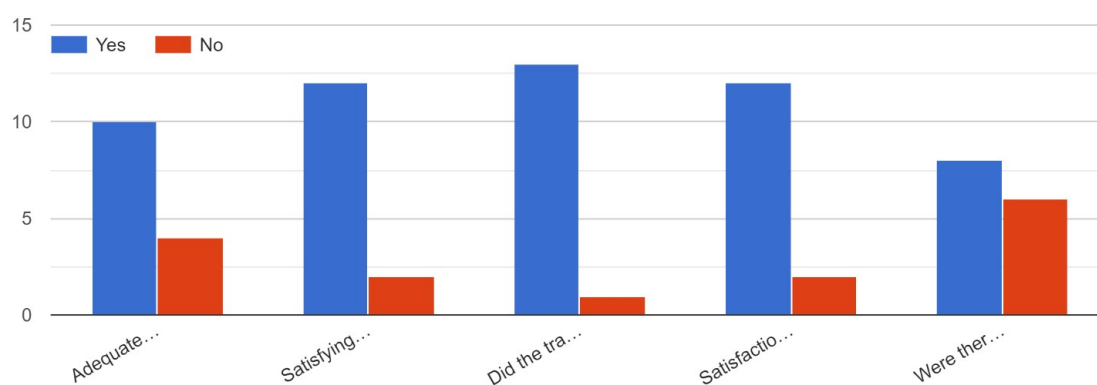
When being asked about the training itself, participants mostly expressed their positive feedback.

The biggest number of those who disagree was expressed when they were asked “Were there goals which were not met” and some of them also thought that there should have been more time for adequate introductions and information about the background of the partners.

That was also witnessed by one of the statements: “The only thing missing from the training was some kind of an introduction and explanation what is the exact aim of it, because without that kind of an introductory clarification, it opened up the possibility of misinterpretation and false expectations.

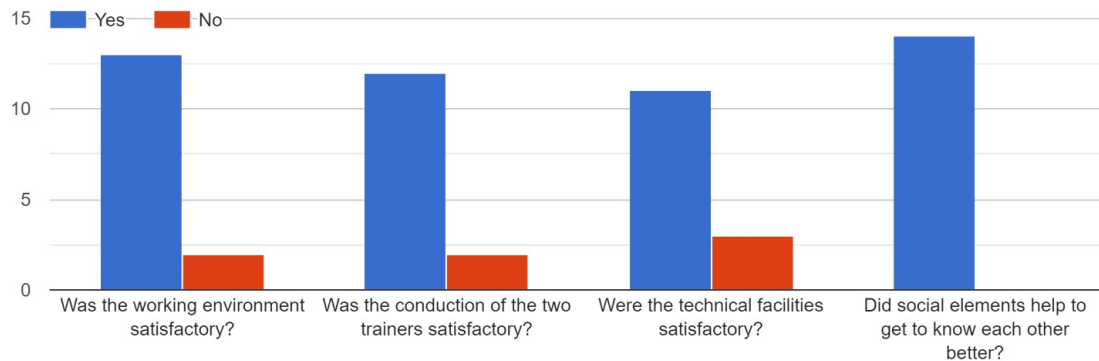
The whole process was exciting, but it could have been improved and we all been on the same page from the beginning”. We also have to say that one participant was very dissatisfied, but majority had a positive comment on how the workshop was led. Majority was also pleased about other factors related to the training. Those conclusions can be witnessed in the following two tables:

The training itself



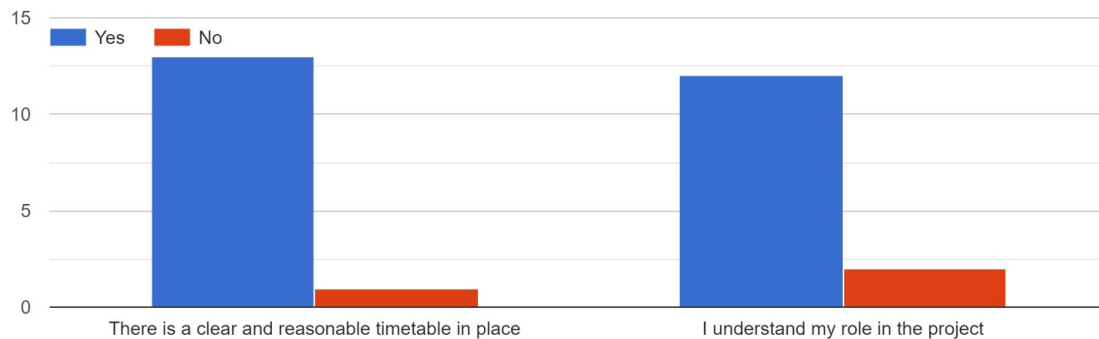


### Other factors



Most of the participants were also clear about the follow-up on the project/training, i.e., about the timetable and they role in the activities that will follow.

### Follow up on the project/training



When asked about the main strengths of this training, participants had very interesting answers.

Most of them had words like: simplicity, team building/group cohesion, intercultural, innovative methodology that gives results, its inclusivity among diverse people.

As the weak points most of them identified a lack of time and more space for sharing experiences, discussion and brainstorming, since this was a training of trainers and not all the participants had a same level of professional experience that led to some brief tensions and delays.

For those with a bit less experience, the rush to achieve the performance in just 4 days created some tension and likely was the reason that a part of the non-professional trainees lacked the joy of creation.

Overall, participants had a good feeling about the project after the training and they even see the disagreements that arose as a chance to hear different opinions.

When asked about if YO.US.T.A.R. methodology is applicable to the target groups with which the participants work on a daily basis the big majority (85,7% of them) were positive about it, although some of them already saw some ways to adapt it to their working context. As one of them defined, it is always "different and the same" depending on the participants.

There was also a question if the participants have any suggestion or ideas to improve the YO.US.T.A.R. method with your working methods and most of them expressed either that they don't have anything that they will add or that they need more time to get to know the method, but some of them already had very concrete suggestions, like involving more icebreakers, singing vocalization, or to use pre-recorded play first and divide them in different groups which will be using rap music, dance and theatre.

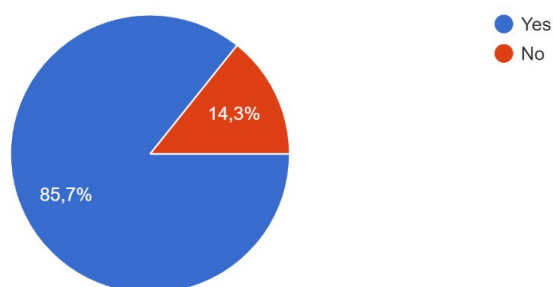


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There were also suggestions to slow down the things and feel better the vibration and the people one works with.

Do you think that ANTYGONE methodology is applicable to your target group with which you work on a daily basis?

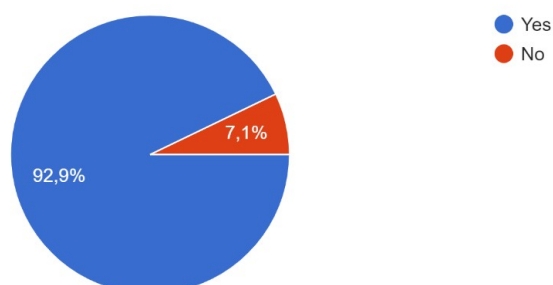
14 risposte



Most of the participants think they will use the YO.US.T.A.R. method after the end of the project.

Do you think you will use the ANTYGONE method after the end of the project?

14 risposte



Teatro alla Guilla also asked the participants if they think the YO.US.T.A.R. method is not suitable with a specific target group? (for example migrants, elderly people, people with physical or mental disability etc. etc.) and the answers were really diverse.

One answers that if it would be applied on people with mental disability, it would need the eye of an expert.

One thinks it is not applicable to elderly people nor youths under 14 years.

Other comments, recommendations, suggestions etc. to make the next meeting /training an even better experience:

- next time this training applies to trainers I think extra explanation is required;
- it would be great to meet also some other local organisations;
- need to respect the standards of professional behaviour by all the participants.



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## Preparation of the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop

After the successful Learning Training and Teaching Activity (LTTA) of the YO.US.T.A.R. project that took place at Palermo (IT) in November 2021, the foundations of the YO.US.T.A.R. workshops experience were placed in a detailed way under the guidance of the partner coordinator, Teatro alla Guilla.

Its realization was the crush test for all future workshops that the partnership organised in all partners' countries, in an effort to promote the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology within different national contexts with the participation of youngsters that face different difficulties. Managing the preparation of the workshop, it has become clear that there are three important factors to notice:

1. Arrangements with local trainers;
2. Facilities;
3. Engagement with target group.

The first and most important part of the preparation phase is the clear communication with the team of local trainers. The practitioners that participated to the LTTA in Italy were about to become the trainers of other people at local level, replicating the methodology of the project, but also adding their own contributions.

For this multiplying effect of the project, their role is crucial, and thus the whole procedure must be clear, but also convenient for them. Local trainers, theatre people or youth workers were invited by the partner organisation to discuss managerial issues, such as availability, timeframe, equipment, structure of the training etc., before the actual organisation of the workshop.



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All aforementioned issues, as well as other preoccupations of the trainers should be discussed and agreed on beforehand. Another significant issue to handle during the preparation of the workshop is the choice of facilities for the actual training.

Again, the opinion of the trainers is crucial, since they should feel comfortable while implementing the workshop and also the place/scenery should be inspiring and respectful to their artistic vision.

What is interesting is that the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology workshop is effectively organised both at traditional interior spaces (theatre stages, cultural centres, community centres etc.) and outdoors (squares, parks, open spaces etc.) if the weather conditions permit.

Again, the opinion of the trainers is very important for the choice of the right facilities.

However, it is the responsibility of the partner organisation to preserve some quality standards, such as accessibility for all participants and safety conditions.

Finally, the third most important factor during the preparation procedure is building an effective audience engagement strategy and to target the right participants, according to the target group of the YO.US.T.A.R. project.

The partner organisation is responsible to build a promotion campaign, coherent with the communication strategy of the whole YO.US.T.A.R. Erasmus+ project, using its communication channels to attract applicants for the workshop.

Brief and clear descriptions of the project and the workshop itself are necessary for finding around 30 youth applicants or people working with youth, willing to get trained.



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The design of an open call, promoted through social media channels, newsletters or local media, is a great way to find suitable participants for the workshop, but also an additional way of disseminating the results of the YO.US.T.A.R. Erasmus+ project and promoting the use of theatre techniques for the social inclusion of disadvantaged young people.



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# Ethical aspects when implementing the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop

Each society creates its own ethical codes that are based on particular circumstances, that is values and morals of that society.

Ethical codes are not the same all over the world, as much as they are, of course, bonded to the times we live in: capitalist, product/profit-focused society.

With the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop and other methods supporting this project, such as Theater of the Oppressed, the consortium wanted to draw the attention to existing perceptions of ethics, requesting it and dreaming about “what if” or, in other words, how to make this world more bearable to live in.

Therefore, the story of Antigone (the exact part where conversation between Creon and Antigone takes place) can introduce this kind of thinking and begin our search for humanity, solidarity and equity.

The idea of YO.US.T.A.R. workshop is not the focus on the story of Antigone, it is suggested to be an introduction to the workshop that trainers and participants create together, based on inclusion of the participants.

Moreover, it can introduce topics that the trainers, as the group working together, have the need and desire to talk about, to make a change. The topics we raise are our reality, even though from different points of views and considering different privileges.



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It is important that each participant finds her/his own analogy with the topic we are working on. It is more important to define the position of the oppressed and the oppressor. In the story of Antigone, there can be many interpretations.

Therefore, we need to define in what way the oppressed is considered oppressed, and oppressor the oppressor, what is the bigger picture, supported by the social norms and ethical codes that allow the systemic oppression (that is the role of the chorus in the play).

If we look at the scene of “Antigone and Creon conversation” it can easily be manipulated through philosophical debate that not only Antigone, standing for humanity and morals, is the oppressed, as well Creon is the oppressed, tragic figure because he loses his son, dies at the end... What we have to pay attention to is the position and power given to them as figures in that particular society and the systemic oppression that is based on ethics of the society in Greek times.

Everything else would be considered an individual fight, that will not change the ethical codes and will repeat over and over. Antigone is oppressed, Creon is tragic, but he holds the power and ethics supporting him as male dictator (the king).

It can raise a topic of gender (female citizens had few rights in comparison to male), of (economic) status (we have to mind that Creon and Antigone are aristocrats and probably this conversation would not have happened if one of them was a peasant), it also holds many symbolic roles where Antigone presents basic human rights and Creon the profit.

An oppressed person is always in a systemic trap, despite (and regardless of) the individual morals. So, back to our times and reality, with the YO.US.T.A.R. working group we tried to find the bigger picture in systemic oppression and question the morals, values and ethics supporting it.

Basically, we look for new ethical codes that enable humanity, dialog, solidarity, inclusion... Ethics are not a set of rules assumed to last forever, they should be and can be reconsidered and changed corresponding to the actual time and the search for “new” ethical codes based on universal ethos (in the example of Antigone it can be the right to a dignified farewell of the deceased).

Regarding the methodological aspect in implementing the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop, we want to emphasize emancipatory approaches, transformative learning and Pedagogy Theatre of The Oppressed.

We are interested in enabling “socio-political process, as an authentic dialogue capable of humanizing” (Freire, 2000 in Gregorčič, 2019).

Societies where we live in are glorifying competitiveness, consumption, superiority.

Practicing the concept of “everyone is a blacksmith of their own fortune”, societies continuously impose structural problems on the shoulders of the individuals.

Besides, it never ceases to communicate that every individual is responsible for their own rescue.

We propose to question these social premises and set them anew by building communities.

One of the main questions we ask ourselves is “how we can work within the society by fostering co-power and not over-power” and collectively address social injustices, on the social level.

We aim to establish spaces where people are in the process of connecting with each other, sharing, analysing and outlining topics that are not exposed enough in public.



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The story of an individual would thus become a broader story, a story of distinctive social groups that can be placed in a broader social context.

Emancipatory pedagogy aims to encourage all involved in a learning process (or, in the case of the YO.US.T.A.R. workshops, a process of artistic creation) to critically analyse the political and social issues and should play a fundamental role in creating a just and democratic society.

This requires a process based on true dialogue that values social interaction, collaboration, authentic democracy, and self-actualisation (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014 in Gregorčič, 2019).

From a perspective of emancipatory pedagogy such approaches will necessarily take positive steps to facilitate social transformation by acting as critique and negation of capitalist hegemony (McLaren, 2003 and Shor, 1992 in Gregorčič, 2019).

When creating a performance, there are several layers of conveying a story that contributes to community building.

This is one of the premises of Theatre of The Oppressed and also suggested in implementing YO.US.T.A.R. workshops.

One of the layers is narrative, the performance has a “script”, it takes place in a sequence of events with or without dialogues, through which it is possible to understand what is happening. The second layer is intonation.

This one gives us impressions, emotional basis, analogies... The third one is visual.

Through scenography and costume design, we communicate the images of the story as experienced by the group (Fritz, 2021).



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The creation of one's own aesthetics has a unique role in creating a community of the oppressed, which is often an expression of resistance to aesthetics as dictated by elites.

It is about fighting for a world without ruling and creating a community of feelings that opposes the dead mechanism of the state to the living force, a community fueled by the sensual embodiment of its idea" (Rancière 2012, p. 66).

This can go with a reciprocal emancipation process of the oppressed with the support of those who have not had a certain experience of oppression.

By taking part in the process, they get a chance to understand it better, connect with it on different levels and also participate in the process of emancipation.

The whole process evokes emotions in the participants, which can be pleasant or unpleasant.

We test and reflect new insights in new situations. In addition to recognising different points of view, we create new ideas, attitudes, values and actions and thus a new collective reality.

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# The YO.US.T.A.R. method: content, methodologies and techniques of the YO.US.T.A.R. sessions

## Educational goals

The method Teatro alla Guilla uses to work with youth is a way, a path, to face current issues using theatre techniques.

YO.US.T.A.R. method is based on Aeneas and Antigone ancient dramas. The meaning of Antigone's Greek drama is always current, as every ancient and classic text. Teatro alla Guilla established this method during a process-training in 2016 and it is still in progress.

Teatro alla Guilla started this process-training-method when it organised its first youth exchange in Palermo called A.N.T.Y.G.O.N.E. – “Acquiring New Tools for Youngsters to Get Out of NEET and Exclusion” so beginning this path by an intuition of the actor-director Valerio Strati.

He used this method because it was a big part of his training as an actor, attending the drama school. He approached the improvisation method during the classes, and working on the characters.

Through the years, he reinforced and improved this working method, performing as actor with professional directors and leading, as trainer-facilitator, students, professionals and amateurs.

Teatro alla Guilla has improved the method every time it organised a workshop/youth exchange/training course and after working with different participants.



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YO.US.T.A.R. is a method but it is also something that can be modelled and adapted, depending on the participants, on their way to embrace suggestions and proposals.

The method doesn't exist without dynamic and active participation. When working with young people and young actors the educational goals are:

- to develop participants' awareness on discrimination and exclusion through non-formal learning methods namely theatre, music, dance and creative/non-formal activities, so to tackle radicalisation;
- to help participants think about a more inclusive Europe and to take proactive action at local level, developing their understanding and experience of European citizenship;
- to foster participants' sense of identity as individuals and European citizens through intercultural learning processes;
- to celebrate the creativity of young people through the staging of Antigone's classic drama, and disseminate the results to other young people and the local community.

YO.US.T.A.R. method will meet the following needs and objectives of the partner organisations:

- introduction of innovative training methods for working with young people at risk of marginalisation and radicalisation;
- increase partner organisations' know-how in the field of radicalisation prevention and the promotion of intercultural dialogue;
- further engagement of the organisations' staff and facilitators in the themes of integration, contrasting radicalisation and xenophobia through arts and non-formal education.



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**The workshop is about Antigone, Aeneas, Oedipus ancient dramas. In particular, Teatro alla Guilla developed the Antigone drama in many youth exchanges, training courses, cooperation partnerships.**

### **Starting from the two main characters' points of view**

Creon, king of Thebes, says (proclaiming an edict) that nobody has to bury Polynice's body otherwise he/she will die, and Antigone wants to bury her brother's body, even though she knows that she is going to break the law and she could die.

She wants to do this action because Polynice was part of the family and he deserves to receive funeral honours. For Antigone it is a kind of "law of the heart".

### **The idea is to compare EU governments' point of view and people's point of view**

EU states don't allow migrants to come to the EU if they don't have a Visa or a job and people want to help and host the migrants, even if the law says differently.

**Creon represents the governments' point of view that rejects people and Antigone symbolises people's point of view that welcome and support other people.**



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## Description of the workshop activities

### Day 1

We start the workshop trying to arrange a debate around the characters' thoughts and reasons, trying to understanding their motivations. We compare the current situation of every EU country with Thebes' situation. Every participant shares his/her experience, talking about what happens in his/her homeland.

It is very important to clarify the focus of the main issue and not wander off the topic. The trainer must not say anything about his/her point of view, giving the opportunity to the participants to speak freely. He/she adds some comments and gives the floor, allowing and encouraging everyone (or the majority of them) to speak, and avoiding arguments or disputes.

The group also talks and debates on the chorus and its point of view. The Thebans represent the European citizens. What do they think about the two points of view? Which side they cheer for?

The facilitator reads the dialogue between Creon and Antigone in English. The interesting part (two pages from the drama) has been chosen: the part when the protagonists face the main topic and they clarify their point of view.

The trainer-facilitator asks what the citizens really think about Antigone and Creon, and what the current (European) citizens think about migrant's issues and the two points of view (governments that push away and people that host).

*If the trainer-facilitator is conscious that the participants are tired or he/she feels that it is necessary to postpone the reading, he/she will give the two pages of the texts after the improvisation. It depends on the situation and the trainer has the possibility to postpone the collective reading of the drama text.*



Every day before starting the workshop activities, the trainers arrange a physical and vocal warm up. Usually, the trainer works with a dancer or choreographer.

After reading and the following debate, the trainer-facilitator uses physical improvisation to express these two different characters/points of view. He/she uses music to help participants to be confident in each other and in themselves, organising games and exercises based on the music.

The trainer uses some acting techniques and games to help participants to improvise. Vocal and voices' improvisations are used. The goal is to stimulate the participants to take position about the matter and encourage them to express their thoughts by theatre techniques.

Theatre improvisation is used, so participants perform a kind of role play. The improvisation method (using voice or body movements) is the right way to break the mental or body blocks and to help the actors/participants to feel free to express themselves by the characters thoughts.

Improvisation is a way for actors and practitioners to be comfortable to say what the characters say using their voice and their body. It is a path to deepen the meaning, and go deep and dig into the characters' soul. Participants will find out something in common between their thoughts and the two main characters' thoughts.

Improvisation has a goal but it is free, without limits, so the participants can use it in the way they want, just they have to remember the goal: expressing their feelings on two characters' positions and emotions.



Here you can check videos of some improvisations:

[Video 1](#) - [Video 2](#)



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## Day 2

The trainer-facilitator watched every improvisation and took notes about what he/she prefers to keep for the final performance: if he/she needs to specify something or if the improvisation is good at all or if nothing has to be changed. He/she gives the participants feedback about their activities but all the improvisations are good. Nobody judges anyone. Theatrical space is free of judgment.

Depending on the participants' experience and knowledge, or creativity and openness, they can go through the real state of mind of the characters. Thanks to improvisation, they have to find out the mood of the characters.

After the improvisations on the two characters, the group works on the chorus and its movements and reactions. Participants try to imagine what people think and say and where they stand during the dialogue between Antigone and Creon. The group can work all together imagining that the two protagonists are in the chorus or separately.

In this working method, it is good to arrange many improvisations about the scenes. How does the chorus react? And why? Who does it support? Is the chorus scared of Creon the king?

This method includes many other working ways.

It is a maieutic way, a kind of a role play. It is physical theatre and vocal theatre as well.

The participants do improvisation and perform in their mother tongue, mixing the sound of different languages. At the end of the day, or even after a certain period of working, the group reflects on the tasks, achievements and on what could be improved.

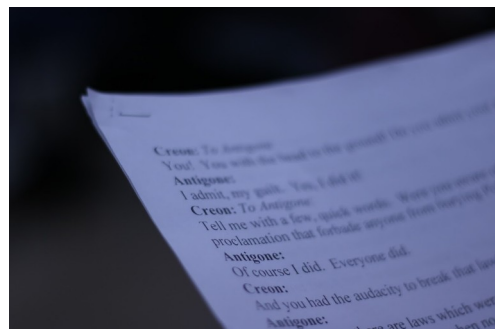
The method uses both English language and, above all, participants' mother tongue; because we believe everyone is comfortable speaking it, especially during the improvisation time.





### Day 3

The next step is to translate the two pages (the dialogue Creon-Antigone) in the participants' mother tongue. The participants work in group and spend half an hour/an hour to analyse and debate about the lines. Using own language is a way to go deeply into the text and understand better the meaning. After that, depending on the participants and their will and inclination, the group chooses the Antigone and Creon pairs (it is not important who plays who – a man can plays Antigone or a woman can impersonate Creon) and the group starts working the two characters. For example, if the group is made of people from seven different countries, the group works, at least, with 7 languages and as many as Antigone and Creon pairs. The rest of the participants work on the chorus role.





#### **Day 4**

The choreographer-dancer and the trainer-facilitator always work together, but sometimes separately: the group is split in two. The choreographer-dancer works with the chorus and the trainer-facilitator works with the remaining pairs.

The trainer gives time to the pairs to arrange their own way to perform the dialogue and their points of view and how to stage their scenes. The pairs work separately and the trainer checks and evaluate them one by one, trying to let what the pairs have suggested and changing what “doesn’t work” (from a theatrical point of view).

The choreographer works on the chorus’ movements and stages their scenes. After this phase of the workshop, the trainers put together chorus and pairs.





## Day 5

The group of participants try to perform in sequence, staging a final performance using the scenes of all the pairs and the chorus's actions, mixing them and always changing the beginning or the ending.

The group stages the final performance (every time in different and unconventional places) using and arranging the various improvisations proposed by the participants, mixing them in order to understand the Antigone drama. It doesn't matter if the beginning or the ending is different than the real Greek text.

It is important the process they need to experience in the last day of the workshop. Putting together the scenes is just a choice of the trainer-facilitator according to his/her acting or directing style and how he/she wants to support the comprehension of the story.



## Day 6

Last day is for dress selection and rehearsal: scene by scene the group performs everything it wants to show to the audience. The group tries and tries the scenes many times until the participants are sure of the movements and the characters' attitude. When all participants are performing well and everything goes smoothly, the group is ready to show the performance to the audience.

[Video](#) of the final (half) performance (2019 – Palermo)



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## Expected results

After seven days, the participants are ready to perform a small performance. They are conscious about the meaning of the project and the two main characters' attitude. They will be a Group, like a theatre company, ready to sort out every problem on the stage and ready to play their roles in a confident way.

They are a heterogeneous group but they will be a unique and solid one. By working and living every day together, they will know each one better than ever and they will build a good relationship, in and out of the stage. They will go back home full of joy and conscious of the performing arts' power.

The quality of facilitators' work has a remarkable impact on young people's life and youth workers have the opportunity to encourage social integration and foster inter-cultural dialogue and understanding. In particular, the needs of the participants will be addressed as follows:

- Participants will explore their own idea of inclusion and migration and will gain the tools to take action in their local communities as champions of inclusion thanks to performing arts techniques and non-formal education. The seven-days workshop particularly focuses on developing participants' understanding of performing arts as tools for inclusion and non-formal education. They will be encouraged to explore the different layers of their own identity, particularly exploring their identity as European citizens through learning sessions and scenarios on social issues and EU policies for youth inclusion and migration;
- Participants will explore Antigone's themes thanks to the preparation and staging of the classic drama and finally representing it to the local community and organisations working for youth inclusion.

Learning outcomes and competences to be acquired:

- developing participants' understanding of discrimination and exclusion through non-formal learning methods, so to tackle radicalisation;
- increasing their theoretical knowledge of radicalisation, the impact of stereotypes, migrants' situation in the EU and relating policies;
- encouraging youth to think about a more inclusive Europe, and take positive action at their local level, improving their knowledge and experience of European active citizenship;
- fostering participants' sense of identity as individuals and European citizens through intercultural learning processes;



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- increasing knowledge of European cooperation opportunities, Erasmus+ programme and the sharing of good practices for conflict management, cultural clashes and integration issues, in particular thanks to visits to local organisations and associations working in the field of migrant integration and support;
- acquiring new competencies and practical tools of arts as a way of preventing radicalisation and fostering inclusion and intercultural dialogue;
- celebrating the creativity of young people through the staging of Antigone's drama and disseminating the workshop results to other young people and local communities.

Participants will surely improve their knowledge of performing arts tools and their powerful effect on individuals. It is proven that, for example, theatre experiential learning is a process by which a person develops knowledge, skills and values through his/her experiences.

During the YO.US.T.A.R. workshop, the individual experiences will be shared with the group transforming the group itself in a social community committed to participate in an evolutionary path made of different cultures and points of view and yet absolutely real.

From an educational point of view, the goal that arises is that of a cultural and behavioural change together with the teaching/learning of specific theatre/dance and music techniques.

After attending the workshop, the participants' attitude will be different towards diversity. Surely, young participants will benefit from nonformal session of theatre, music and dance and Antigone's story, but also participants with fewer opportunities will benefit from performing arts training and techniques, gaining an improved perception of themselves and the world they are living in.



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The workshop will also facilitate the facilitators' networking ability and the exchange of good practices on the project topics leading to the development of new project and cooperation in the field of intercultural dialogue and social inclusion among the sending organisations involved. The workshop will impact the target group and the partner organisations both in the short and long-term.

## **IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS**

A strong impact on the participants is insured by the techniques which will be used: theatre, music and dance really act on individuals increasing their self-consciousness and confidence. Thanks to the workshop non-formal activities, participants will:

- increase their understanding of inclusion and discrimination, EU policies for active citizenship and other mobility opportunities under the Erasmus+ framework;
- develop intercultural understanding and friendship all over Europe;
- foster confidence and personal development through participation in non-formal education and activities such as contact improvisation, music and theatre techniques;
- develop key competencies (communication in foreign languages, learning to learn, social and civic competencies and cultural awareness and expression).

Participants will be proud of their improvements during the exchange, and will understand the positive results of collaborating with other Europeans, which will foster a sense of community among European citizens for the future.

Participants will raise their awareness of social exclusion and migration and how to represent them, and will increase their interest in working at their local level to avoid any kind of racism, xenophobia and discrimination.



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## IMPACT ON PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

Thanks to YO.US.T.A.R. method, the participating organisations will generate new organisational learning and specific skills for their staff.

The new non-formal methods related to theatre, music and movement will provide new tools for the partner organisations in their work with young people from disadvantaged areas or youngsters facing some sort of exclusion, namely with migrant background.

We are confident that the YO.US.T.A.R. will impress other trainers and participants and will help replicate the experience applying non-formal methods in future projects or training courses targeting young people.

## IMPACT ON TARGET GROUPS

Our main target groups are young people and youth with fewer opportunities.

Through intensive theatre, music and dance sessions for the staging of a final performance, young people will improve their skills in improvisation and collaborative art-making, thus enriching their technical baggage as performers and getting to know other aspects of their artistic activity.

The impact we expect on young participants is the acknowledgment that arts can represent useful instruments for self-consciousness and personal growth as amateur performers or simply young European citizens, thanks to these tools.

Arts can change for better their life conditions thus increasing their chance to live in a European society.



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## Instructions to trainers on how to prepare, implement and evaluate the training results

The training results can be evaluated in progress, observing the participants. How are they involved in the learning process? How do they approach the method?

The trainers can also arrange a small briefing after every daily session to have direct feedback from the participants: if they understand the tasks, how they feel after a working day, if they are satisfied.

“Understanding” if the results are good and the participants can replicate the method is something that the trainer can experience leading a workshop, comparing his/her skills and attitudes with the participants.

It is not something theoretical but practical. And, above all, evaluation depends on the trainer-facilitator’s background, his/her attitude to teach and lead. He/she can also choose to adapt the method to the participants: whether they have enough knowledge, they feel comfortable or not etc. etc.

Every training is different because the trainer changes and the participants change too.





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## Results from the pilot sessions in partner countries

After the LLTA in Palermo, all partners had to organise pilot sessions in their own country to test the YO.US.T.A.R. method with 30 young people. Partners were free to adapt the method and change some sessions if they thought it was necessary for the best implementation of the workshop sessions at local level.

After the piloting sessions, partners were asked to fill in a report on the piloting so to enrich this manual with the results from all participating countries.

### Piloting sessions in Serbia

The local workshops in Serbia were held in Novi Sad and were conducted by Attila Antal. The trainer followed the guidelines given in the description of the workshop and adjusted them slightly for the specific needs of our group and the circumstances in the country/city.

The trainer also shared basic info on the participants in the beginning of the workshops, during the sessions, in combination with the different tasks. According to the trainer, the main strength of these pilot sessions was that the group can be formed very quickly and the progression of the tasks helps developing a sense of community between the participants.



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Some showable results - short scenes, even a short performance can be developed within the given timeframe - moreover, even in a shorter time period, some visible and valuable results can be produced. The trainer did not report weak points in the piloting itself, but some questions about the construction of the methodology for local specific circumstances came out.

The main concern was the adequacy of the given contemporary topic that can arise from looking at Antigone, the drama, as a potential for interpreting and addressing current political and social problems. In Serbia, the question of migrations, and especially the immigration from African/Middle Eastern countries is hardly present in the knowledge of the ordinary people.



As Serbia is not part of the European Union, either, the structures and the perception of principles and rules and laws are different than in EU countries. From this outsider position, the contemporary topic that can be addressed through the basic conflict in the drama can take different forms (e.g., current political situation, rise of far-right, fascist ideologies and their justification through quasi-historic factoids in the general media, in the educational system, etc.).

The other problem/drawback concerned the language layer of the method. As the trainer had - and most probably would always have - a quite homogenous group of people (nationality and language-wise), the advantages of having a multi-ethnic, multi-language group, where the scenes can be developed through combining languages that the participants don't speak themselves, and playing around with improvisations based solely on emotions, movements, positioning, but not understanding the language of the dialogues were missing in Serbian workshops where everybody could understand each other's language.



According to Attila, YO.US.T.A.R. methodology can be applicable to his daily target group with some adjustments. It also depends on the specific group we would address with the methodology. In my opinion it can be very useful in an environment of high school students, e.g., as an extracurricular activity.

In the section “any suggestion or ideas to improve the YO.US.T.A.R. method”, Attila said that during his work with the group he introduced a task, where the participants chose a word or a sentence, or a couple of sentences from the given excerpt of the drama and they were only allowed to use the chosen words in the improvisations they were developing. First came the wordless improvisation and the words were later added to them, thus changing the feel, the meaning and the perception of the scenes.

On a more general level, Attila felt that the tasks could be more precisely described in the description of the method itself. For example, the exact excerpts from the drama should be stated, because these excerpts are one of the foundations of the work during the workshop days.

Furthermore, some of the practices and tasks could and should be described more precisely, because improvisations is a way-too-wide description for some of the tasks that should be completed. He would also introduce more exact descriptions for the choreographic work, from day three on, because there will surely be situations where you will not be able to employ a choreographer to participate and work with the group, so it would be useful to give the interested parties some overview of the choreographic/physical tasks, too.

Attila concluded his report on the piloting sessions saying that he will use the YO.US.T.A.R. method even after the end of the project first of all because of its flexibility and the archetypical story it employs as the starting point.

Here is a **short video** of the piloting sessions in Novi Sad (Serbia).



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## Piloting sessions in Bulgaria

Know and Can Association have carried out the piloting sessions in Bulgaria. Two trainers – Lora Yoncheva and Aleksandra Radeva (who took part in the training about the method in Palermo, Italy) guided the sessions with 15 participants.

To prepare the sessions, they followed the given instructions, added some additional warm-up activities and made some minor changes to the activities and conducted the training. Before the training, the trainers understood the main background of the participants in order to adapt the activities to their needs, if possible.

At the beginning of the training the participants and trainers shared information about themselves. Some of the participants already knew each other which made the process more efficient.

Among the strengths of the method, the trainers declared that there is flexibility in the process of work: if the trainer sees that the group has some new needs that were not considered before the training, they can be addressed during the training with very small amendments. There is always room for discussion and feedback: even if it is not planned, an additional session for feedback or providing opinion by the participants and the trainers can be implemented.

The activities were interesting for the participants and some of the activities were entirely new for the participants which helped in their personal development. The activities could be developed and adapted. The training is fine but has to be adapted depending on the different target groups.



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For example, if we have a group of actors and people who are physically active, the physical activities are accepted quite well. If there is a group of educators, the physical aspect of the training is fine for the ones who like physical activities but for the ones who don't- the training can be quite challenging and it is better to change physical activities to simple ones.



The topic of immigration is a very sensitive one and even a hot topic in Bulgaria. For trainers, teachers, young people, and people working in the field of art this topic is perfectly fine but it can be a hard topic for some other people.



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That is why it is a good suggestion to check the participants' background before the training. It is good to add more warm-up activities if we want to apply the training to people who are not familiar with art or have not participated in non-formal training and activities before, because some people can feel shy.

In general, the Bulgarian trainers said that they can use the YO.US.T.A.R. method with youth workers and people working in the field of art. With some minor amendments it can be used with young people and children.

In case the group consists of participants with too different background, trainers can do a preliminary research on their interests and capabilities in order to plan the training according to the participants.

If the timing allows and the participants are not people with artistic background, it would be useful to do some additional acting exercises for non-professionals in order to make the participants feel comfortable and relaxed.

The method is quite suitable for people with background in theatre. For people who don't have such background, it is better to adapt the activities according to their needs.

For example, to make a simple physical warm-up; to make more ice-breaking activities; to start each day with different ice-breaking activities. The method can be used for different social situations and topics- not only topics connected to migration.



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## Piloting sessions in Sweden

In Sweden, the main task of the pilot was to present and test YO.US.T.A.R. methodology with the young people from socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods in line with YO.US.T.A.R. workshop instructions to develop participants' awareness on discrimination and exclusion through non-formal learning methods namely theatre, music, dance and creative/non-formal activities, so to tackle radicalisation.

The training was carried out in cooperation with community-based youth organisations in Uppsala and Knivsta municipalities for 30 people between 18 and 30. The workshop was carried out within the broader framework of social inclusion and discrimination training in the context of which YO.US.T.A.R. method was tested.





The main strength according to the participants is a creative way to digging into the issues of social inclusion, active citizenship and human rights.

The YO.US.T.A.R. method proposes a comfortable way for sharing own experiences and listening to other experiences which creates the feeling of belonging and being a part of a bigger community. It is much easier “to open up” in this way compared to “traditional” training and counselling activities.

The participants could themselves feel the difference between the first and the last day of the workshop in terms of stronger self-esteem and motivation. Some sessions could be carried out during shorter period of time giving more time to discussion or having shorter days. All participants who started the workshop participated in all sessions.

The workshop shall include some theoretical parts about discrimination, human rights with focus on migrant rights so participants get a better understanding of why this topic is important and what´s in it for them. MIR started the workshop with some basics on Human Rights, Refugee Law and discrimination issues before going to Antigone concept. Participants could refer to the theoretical base during the whole workshop.

Another prerequisite for this method to be successful is fluent language in which workshop is carried out. Some of our participants had limited Swedish language level, which made it more challenging for them to participate.

The method is highly relevant as complementary to training and counselling activities carried out by MIR in socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Apart from migrant issues and European identity issues the YO.US.T.A.R. method can be adopted to cover other human rights areas, such as active citizenship, employment opportunities, etc.



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The method will be used by MIR even for other target groups as unemployed people with long distance to labour market and Ukrainian refugees who came to Sweden.

One method used in Sweden during the pilot was to structure the dialogue with participants via a study circle methodology.

To put it simple, this methodology requires a certain number of questions to discuss which are prepare in advance, a circle leader who leads the discussion and follow-up with participants.



In this way the workshop becomes more a training session with clearer pedagogical objectives and expected outcomes which are followed up by the group under the lead of the study circle leader.

The Swedish partner will definitely use the method with some alteration:

1. They will structure the discussion according to the study circle methodology;
2. They will shorten the workshop to 3 days;
3. They will broaden the area to cover other Human Rights topics.

Swedish trainers have tried the method with youth from socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with the mixed backgrounds of NEETs, migrants and university students. The common factor was age (18 to 30) and geographical area they live in.

The workshop shows that the strengths of the YO.US.T.A.R. method is not to limit it to a specific group but to keep it open to mixed groups – social inclusion happens when different people get to interact with each other.

In some cases, for example, when there are language barriers, it is good to have the groups speaking common language and to have a trainer speaking the same language.



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## Piloting sessions in Spain

During the two pilot sessions in Spain, ACD LA HOYA completed the programmed objectives with some modifications, but small ones, related to space and materials.

At the beginning of the activities, ACD LA HOYA programmed different games and activities for all the participants to get to know each other, making a more familiar and uninhibited atmosphere, so they carried out several games to introduce each participant, tell his/her personal and professional background.

The strengths of the pilot sessions are the development of creativity in the artist, practicing the art of improvisation, expression and narrative through the language of the body, prioritising corporal expression over verbal expression.



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Within the activities ACD LA HOYA had a space for self-reflection of the sessions and activities, and to lie down for improvement, as it is always important to count on the participants and their expectations.

The participants valued very positively the activities carried out and also the possibility to adapt them to different age groups or needs. They valued very positively the preparation of the trainers and the predisposition to help at all times.

Although the time was used very well, many of the participants felt that different sessions over a longer period of time would be more beneficial.



The difference in the level of the participants is also something to take into account, as for people who have already participated in this kind of activities it is easier to do the exercises and sessions. It is recommendable to use simple and cooperative exercises so that in the first phases everyone feels integrated in the activity.

This methodology is applicable to any working group, in fact it has been perfectly adapted to the working group we work with, young people and adults with free time and motivated by art, all this has been very useful and productive for both the association, the trainers and participants.

With the group ACD LA HOYA worked with, young people from different backgrounds between 18-35 years old, the method worked very well, with some minor adaptations. ACD LA HOYA suggests that if they work with groups that do not speak the same language, they would have to adapt the sessions and make them a bit easier and more bearable in order to integrate everyone.



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## Piloting sessions in Greece

For the preparation of the piloting session in Greece, the project manager of Mosaic conducted a preparatory meeting with the responsible trainer to deliver the YOUSTAR workshop.

There, MOSAIC designed the structure of the pilot session and how they wanted to break down the teams into smaller groups to facilitate the participation of people and to cover all needs (time, date, duration etc.).

All necessary material (guidance, text, photos), with the information gathered after the LTTA in Palermo, was sent to our trainer in time to help her with the preparation.

An open call was released to invite young people to participate, and all the materials for the realisation of the workshop -such as setting, handouts to participants, translated text of Antigone in Greek – were well prepared in time.



Each session was designed to last at least three hours, so there was enough time to guarantee the smooth integration of all participants in the team. The initial part of the piloting was devoted to the presentation of all members, their background, experience, thoughts, expectations etc.

The participants were placed in a cycle. The trainer gave clear guidance of the step-by-step procedure and clarified that there were no performance standards, not a prior experience with theatrical workshops was a prerequisite, rather than everyone could participate in the way it felt more comfortable with. A first cycle of reading the main scene of the Antigone drama in Greek followed, to break the ice and familiarize everyone with the context.

One of the main strengths of the piloting was the power dynamics that were developed in the context of smaller groups of participants. According to the feedback that MOSAIC gained from the participants, it was easier for them to “expose” themselves during improvisations and drama process within smaller and “safer” groups.

They got to know better each other during the process and through the performance of each member. The group dynamic that was developed was very positive and worked harmoniously, despite the differences. The team members based their theatrical choices and decisions on consensus, after the open and collaborative exchange of opinions.

MOSAIC would prefer to have a more divergent group of participants, with different backgrounds and cultural differences to point out the unifying power of the drama.

Especially for the 1st pilot session, we would need a greater gender balance (all participants were women), to have a bigger variety of perspectives.



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The YOUSTAR methodology is definitely applicable to the youth target group, among others young people facing financial difficulties, precarious jobs, unemployment, anxiety disorders and mental health issues.

Due to the long economic problems in Greece and the high unemployment rates, many young people that MOSAIC works with find themselves somehow isolated from the rest of the society and they often feel unable or unwilling to participate in educational and cultural activities.

Therefore, the YO.U.S.T.A.R. methodology helped everyone feel more integrated and more capable of sharing their thoughts and feeling with the use of theatrical techniques, until they realise that they have many more similarities than they thought.



For young people with mental health issues, the methodology could be transferred collaboratively by a theatre practitioner and a psychologist/social worker/drama therapist, so that both the drama part and the consulting part would help youngsters feel better integrated.

One good idea to enrich the YOUSTAR method, which received positive feedback from Greek participants, was the collective reading procedure of some scenes of the drama, that was introduced before the improvisations. The reading of the ancient text in a circle helped the participants to experience the point of views of all the protagonists.

What is more, after the first collective reading, a discussion was held within the group on how the Antigone drama represents modern social issues with all people sharing their thoughts.

A second round of collective reading was held, with people noticing different nuances of the characters after the discussions. Therefore, the collective reading technique could complete the project method embracing all people to join, even those not feeling that much comfortable with the drama process.

Mosaic's team has embraced the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology and has agreed that it will use it in the future in the context of several educational and cultural activities that it holds. Not only when working with young people, but also with elders it would be very interesting and useful to implement the YO.US.T.A.R. method for purposes of social inclusion and community engagement.

The piloting was structured in different more concrete sessions of around 4 hours each, with smaller groups of people. This choice worked well and facilitated the process in terms of time management, since a week-long workshop would not be appealing to people that are not professional actors or theatre practitioners.



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The YO.US.T.A.R. method is definitely ideal for young people, that are full of energy and creativity even when those elements are somehow “hidden” or covered.

However, since the method was not based entirely on the drama itself, but it also included elements of kinesiology, it could be sometimes challenging for people with physical disabilities. With the contribution of an experienced facilitator with expertise for this target group, we believe that it could be adjusted.

In Greece the training experience of the YO.US.T.A.R. method was beautiful for both youth workers and young people, and proved for another time the educational strength of theatre as a tool for overcoming social obstacles.



## Piloting sessions in Slovenia

In Slovenia during the piloting sessions KUD Transformator were testing and exploring the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology with two groups of young people. Both of the groups were young people with economic obstacles, mostly unemployed youth, precarious workers, NEETs.

The piloting sessions took place between March and June 2022 in Ljubljana in a youth centre of a partner organization, Zavod Bob. KUD Transformator took a longer time for the introduction part as it was important to give time to connect and to create a trustful and safe environment for participants to express themselves in the most authentic possible manner.



KUD Transformator introduced the techniques, games and exercises of Theatre of The Oppressed to support the process in this regard. It was also important for establishing the body and the voice as tools of expression.

According to the Slovenian partner, the strengths of the method are:

- the tool for 'discussing' topics by using artistic expressions;
- a very strong motive taken from ancient Greece yet being timeless, seems as significant as it may had been when it was written;
- being rather open as a method thus giving space to different styles of facilitation (which can be advantage and disadvantage at the same time).

### **Weak points**

As the pilot sessions results showed in Slovenia, the story of Antigone can be interpreted in many different ways. As the participants were trying to connect what are the implications of the story in contemporary world, there were mainly two issues brought up – one was the binarity to male and female gender and other was issues of patriarchy.

KUD Transformator were as well exploring the interpretation of Antigone by Slavoj Žižek by whom Antigone is the representative of contemporary conservative and rightist narrative, clinging to traditions thus being the defender of the EU fortress (when it comes to the questions of migration).

Participants interpreted Kreon as the carrier of the power, thus being a metaphor of the patriarchy with immense influence over our lives. Thus, keeping the above mentioned in mind, the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology may be too suggestive in how to place Antigone and the different characters into the contemporary context.



Another point is as well the role of the facilitator which may be too directive. The facilitator should be there to hold the space for participant to express as well in choosing the improvisations for the performance. Of course, there can be a debate, however, the facilitator should not take the position to decide on their own.

The methodology can be a frame for working with Slovenian daily target groups. It can serve as a platform for opening various existential topics. KID Transformator complemented it with the methodology of The Theatre of The Oppressed which supported the participants in involving their personal backgrounds.



It is important to use the emancipatory power of theatre when working with target groups with less opportunities.

For this reason, it is applicable with some adjustments. In the piloting sessions, KUD Transformator was complementing the YO.US.T.A.R. methodology by using the Theatre of The Oppressed, mostly image theatre and newspaper theatre in exploring the topic.

They as well used forum theatre as a form of presenting the outcomes. As it turned out in the pilot sessions in Slovenia, the topics that eventually came out were much related to gender roles.

The changes to be put in place would be related to giving more time for exploring these topics by using different methods and also by giving some more social and historical background to it.

According to the Slovenian partner, the method is suitable to be used with various target groups. Depending on the specifics of a certain target group the method should be adjusted accordingly. As stated by KUD Transformator, the facilitator's role being a sort of a director is not suitable in working with vulnerable target groups.

The participants are to be given full power to decide upon the presentation of the performance while the facilitator is merely supporting this process methodologically.



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## Conclusions

The YO.US.T.A.R. method is rooted in ancient Greek myths but they are still modern and applicable to today's social issues and challenges. Working with youth for their social inclusion through theatre has been proved a successful practice in the last 7 years during which Teatro alla Guilla has been implementing several EU-funded projects (youth exchanges, training courses, cooperation partnerships) getting involved hundreds of youth organisations, youth workers, young people, theatre practitioners and so on.

This manual wants to be the first attempt to rationalise the methods used in many occasions by Teatro alla Guilla and to guide all theatre practitioners, social workers, youth workers in using theatre techniques to empower youngsters and other target groups with fewer opportunities.

After the LTTA in Palermo and the piloting sessions in Greece, Italy, Spain, Serbia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Sweden, the project consortium can easily state that the YO.US.T.A.R. method is a valid tool to work with young people to face sensitive topics like social exclusion, migration, xenophobia and racism to overcome stereotypes and intolerance.

This manual is a free and accessible open resource for those who want to use theatre in their daily work with young people, knowing that the methods included in the publication have been used and tested on hundreds of participants from all around Europe.



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