

Evaluation of the project Creative Waves by ENUT

For the internal evaluation of the project Creative Waves following methodology was used:

- Participating in all partner meetings to follow the progress of the project and suggest certain activities
- Providing gender equality materials to partners
- Preparing the questionnaires for the participants of the workshops
- Preparing and conducting interviews with the representatives of partners
- Summarizing the results of the questionnaires and interviews
- Presenting the results at various events and at the final evaluation

1. Answers to questionnaires

The questionnaire consisted of three groups of questions:

- Data characterizing the participant
- General questions about participating in workshops
- More specific questions about goals, activities and effects

All together 34 participants answered the questionnaires which were divided into two parts: before and after workshops. All respondents were women, mainly in the age group between 25-50, evenly distributed between rural, small town and city areas, mostly with secondary or higher education.

Mostly they **learned about the activities** from a friend or from Facebook, from Polish participants about half were already engaged in some kind of similar activities and found out about the project in that way. The **main reasons for participation** were the curiosity to learn something new, to meet new people or to meet with people you already know, to discuss new business opportunities. Almost unanimously, it was considered **important to preserve and develop local traditions**. They have had different **contacts with tradition** so far. Some of the participants have practiced traditional craft for a long time, some of them have not had any contacts so far and some of them have had experience of participation in concerts and exhibitions so far. There was also a **unanimous desire to acquire new digital opportunities** or to supplement existing knowledge, mostly in order to increase their economic independence.

There were 3 main subjects that interested the organizers the most: women empowerment, how to bring together older and younger generations, and mix traditional craft with digital tools.

Generally participants felt before the activities that **working in a group of women is empowering and special bond can be developed through working together closely** with occasional "I don't know"s as answers. It was clear that participants had never given much thought about the idea women working together and how that can affect their work or spirit. Same questions after the activities resulted more firm answers – it was generally found that this approach was very rewarding. Mainly emotional support, community, special bond through mutual action, women power, strength was mentioned. Swedish participants even started to call themselves Creative Sisters.

About the topic of **bringing younger and older generations together** the suggestions varied greatly. The question "**Is it possible to make traditional pastimes/art attractive for young generations?**" was answered positively and several ways to involve young people were proposed, such as showing and teaching our generations tradition and handicrafts, make connections between older and younger traditions, social media, online training, through conversations and videos, through written articles, integrate embroidery with the things interesting for the youth, special workshops for children, promote fashion for "tradition", translate it to the topics attractive to the youth e.g. trendy clothes, gadgets.

Respondents had less faith in the abilities of women of the **older generation and the desire to combine traditional craft skills with digital** tools. There were only a few suggestions that older people should go to computer courses or teach themselves to use a computer locally and show them this is attractive and useful, that a possibility of selling their works on the Internet works.

The final questions of the questionnaire "**How did you benefit from the creative work on the application?**" "**What did you learn?**" and "**How can you transfer this knowledge to other aspects of your life?**" are very important for the further development of the project. The participants admitted that they learned and gained new skills, creative approach to creating traditional products with the use of new technologies. The respondents also mentioned that they have learned how to make an app, particular stages of its development. It was difficult but a very necessary new skill. Ability to transfer apps to other areas is beneficial. Participants believed, that local traditional patterns can provide a unique, attractive addition to your clothes/jewellery/looks (tattoo)/objects of everyday use.

2. Interviews with the partners

The interviews were conducted via ZOOM and lasted about an hour per partner. Interviews also consisted of three groups of questions:

- General info about organizers, previous co-operation, preparing for specific project
- The course of project "Creative Waves", it's ups and downs, what did we learn, what to do differently next time
- Has the project helped to better understand the aspect of gender equality

Although not all the partners knew each other prior to the project, everyone had had a contact or co-operation experience at least with one other partner. The initial idea came from one of the earlier projects but shifted a bit from working with only professional artists to include also non-professionals. In preparation period everyone had their specific task although ENUT was included later in the process.

Project progress was interrupted by **Covid-19 and war in Ukraine**.

Although Covid-19 was already a familiar phenomenon it still affected the logistic, interrupted with planning: "it was hard to find participants, we kept the numbers lower". During the project's time Covid-19 almost disappeared, so the initial idea about empowering women during the pandemic was not so valid anymore, instead it became more of gaining knowledge, to learn, to participate in social connection.

The war affected the project more greatly. In the project we had also cooperated with a very devoted and gifted team of activists from Kaliningrad Region who acted as subcontractors. Unfortunately, as the result of the aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine CBSS was forced to suspend all cooperation with Russian entities and as of May 17th 2022, Russia has

withdrawn from the CBSS altogether. Therefore, our partnership continued the planned activities without the Russian side although partners felt that Kaliningrad's group had a great value to the project.

In overall partners who conducted workshops were **satisfied with the participants**: „such an engaged group, learning from each other, interested about subject“, „We didn't work any miracles, participants had motivation, were interested. They lacked courage and believing in themselves, we provided self-esteem, they can do even more with the knowledge.“ The birth of cooperation between participants and continued networking as very important aspects were also mentioned, since one can't foresee or force them to happen.

If asked what the **project taught** to them and what would they want to **develop more** in future projects partners stated that working with and for women to develop their digital skills is still important, working in groups to promote cooperation and learning from each other is also crucial. Future ideas involve including participants with even more diverse backgrounds, want to promote more regional culture, also conduct activities at smaller (more rural) places, go deeper with the digital tools and concentrate more on gender equality, bringing together younger and older generations and Balticness.

When asked about **gender equality** aspect partners admitted that neither they or the participants consciously never thought or discussed about it but the idea was always behind everything they were doing. During the project it was noticeable how important was to create a safe space for women where they could share ideas, encourage each other and so gain more confidence and strength. “Helping women to be stronger. Craft was just the hobby, but we showed how others are doing it and it has a bigger meaning.” “We now understand the long chain of women who supported each other and community. Bravery of everyday, women taught the tradition, upkeeping tradition is very important.”

In conclusion:

The trainings were necessary to acquire new skills, to get to know other participants better, but also to understand that old local traditions must be kept and highlighted through modern IT possibilities and used as much as possible to decorate various things. It is also an opportunity to further develop tourism in your region and develop souvenirs with local patterns. All the suggestions made in questionnaires are worth implementing. They cannot be implemented in this short period, but it can certainly be done in the following projects. Also, partners developed new ideas during implementing the project. Empowering women and strengthening bonds between generation should be a recurring theme in next projects.