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Output 3: REPORT

On the dynamics and implementation of the workshops with the children involved from the region of Veliko Tarnovo

Focused work with the target group continued on a regular basis, in connection with the preliminary working schedules. During the period May 2015 – December 2015 took place a total of 15 meetings. The total working hours being 39. Each meeting is accompanied by a presence list, which is personally signed by all participants.

The monthly presence lists are attached to the project archive.

The main work during this period was directed towards mastering various theatrical techniques, practical skills for using varied acting approaches, individual work, working with a partner, working in a team/group.

How did the activities go?

The participating children always arrived about 20-30 minutes earlier than the appointed hour. Considering that they are at different ages and come from different schools, they used this time to share various stories from their daily schedule, to discuss activities from previous workshop sessions, to exchange experiences. These important, according to the team, minutes brought them closer together. We noticed that the children became more at ease and relaxed in each other's company. They discovered a common language, they found that they were moved by the same things, they listened to each other and even on occasions when they criticized one

another, this criticism was a positive one, no one being hurt or angry or unhappy.

All the meetings started in a different way. That is for certain. Still, the main thing was to specify what had impressed them most during the previous working session. It was impressive to notice that the shyness from the beginning was gradually giving way to freedom of speech. The children were becoming more and more eloquent and talkative, they were expressing their emotions in a more liberated way, they started also demonstrating the more confident behavior of self-assured young people. As soon as the minutes for revelations were over, as we called them, always followed a starting presentation of the objectives and tasks of the current workshop session. The children listened carefully to the so called plan, as well as to the instructions. They often asked questions and made proposals. The real work started with exercises for trust between them and the team. Each new meeting demonstrated how much more they trusted each other, how much they started to rely on each other, how they learned to seek help and to provide support to the others. Their insecurity was gradually leaving them. The movements of the body were becoming more accurate, tempered, more automatic, i.e. the children were learning how to walk, sit and move without thinking about each separate motion. They listened carefully to each instruction. They carried out the exercises with great precision, trying to be as best as they could. They often criticized, but their criticism took a comic form. They laughed together, they helped each other and they enjoyed their successes. They often changed certain techniques, gave opinions, demonstrated ways of doing things and made the meetings not only more fun, but often richer in sensations and concepts. Thus they created overall concepts for certain elements of the surrounding world.

In the workshop sessions we included techniques from various theatrical genres. They learned about the history of theatre, about the first notes concerning its creation, about the number of actors. They were really impressed when they discovered that in the beginning the actors were only male and they played also the female characters. They searched for various similarities and differences between the various types of theatre. They



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created stories, scripts and played out the acts. Often they were only given a certain situation and then were being left to create the characters on their own and to play out the story by improvising.

At the end of each sessions we all sat in a circle and each participant shared his/her opinion about the work that had taken place. Each was free to express him/herself in whichever way they wanted. Some did it with a gesture or mimicking, others used words or only one word, expression or sentence to express themselves.

We always finished by opening the door to next time activities just a little bit in other for their curiosity to stay alert. We asked them for difficulties they had met, for their opinions and recommendations. With each following meeting we became more aware of the children's growing self-criticism. They gave numerous ideas, which we wrote down in order to use them in the process of their future development.

The children's development was rapid. They wanted newer and newer things. Their progress was clearly visible. Their parents' and their teachers' comments, as well as the feedback from their friends proved this. The children were also proving it. They constantly insisted for the meetings to become more often. We always spent more time than the scheduled and to our joy, their parents also started to gather and to share opinions about the project.

Each following meeting proved that the development of the inherent possibilities, potential and needs led to quality results.

The children started expressing their feelings and desires in a freer way. Their insecurity when making contact evaporated. All of them passed on to a higher level. They experienced a real need to use adequately the theatre techniques, to participate in musical and dance events with appropriate theatrical etudes.

On the basis of their needs and considering their individual potential, the project leaders in Veliko Tarnovo decided to give the children an extra chance and to let them go even further. Theatre "Vesel" (which means "Joyful" in English) was invited to work with them. A first meeting was

organized for both sides to present themselves to each other. This was a great challenge both for the children and for the artists.

During the period January-April 2016 were conducted a total of 12 meetings. We can hardly find the proper words to depict those meetings. They were longed for, they were full of a great charge, overflowing with a wonderful mood, laughter, jokes and lots of work. Despite being tired after each meeting, the children would lie on the floor, sharing their opinions, telling and retelling stories, frequently imitating something the actors had done.

Vesko and Margi are the artists working with the children. Their multiannual work with children had taught them to recognize their needs well. During one of the meetings they shared with the project manager: “Rosi, the children have a huge potential and are highly motivated.”

They really are highly motivated. After each following workshop sessions their level of awareness was increasing and their positive skills were rising. The group work was gaining popularity. Soon the group was joined by five more children as volunteers. Suddenly the sessions gained a different shape. The work with the artists was motivating them even further. The children gradually started considering the meetings not only as fun, but as a big and serious challenge. Everything, which was being shown to them by Vesko and Margi was professional, revealing the beauty of theatre, its vastness and nature. The children were not simply rehearsing. They were creating, reliving, learning newer things. Matters, which seemed simple at a first glance, adopted a different meaning and gained value and importance. Emotions, which were previously expressed thunderously, were now becoming controlled. Speech was not a simple communication tool any more. It was a tool for self-expression, influencing and social interaction. The artists shaped up also the children’s musical and artistic culture. They taught them to develop their skills and competences and how to shape up new skills. The children made another step forward.

They adopted a need to use various theatrical techniques, too participate in musical and dance events or in theatrical etudes, as well as to receive positive evaluations and attention. This way the participants developed their



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potential for self-expression through the expression tools of various types of arts and mostly theatre.

On the basis of their increased experience, combined with their skills and potential, the children undertook another challenge. They discussed several plays, considered their possibilities and decided that it is time to show what they have learnt. Now they are rehearsing a play, which will be presented during the last project meeting in Veliko Tarnovo. The costumes and props are going to be created by the children themselves. During one of the meetings, the parents shared that they are also going to help. A new idea came up – to create something like a theatre work-station, in which parents and children work as a team.

As of today the project target group in Veliko Tarnovo is characterized with very high attendance. The children remain devoted to the workshop and keep coming regularly. The work takes place in a calm and responsible manner. Both children and leaders/facilitators still exchange experiences from shared week in Palermo, Italy. We are enjoying exceptional responsibility and devotedness also from the parents, who are constantly available and supporting us.