

INARTdis – Artistic education for all. Fostering social inclusion for all through artistic education, Erasmus+/EACEA-project

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Abstract

The right of people with disabilities to participate in cultural life is ensured by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2007, Art. 30, § 1). Linked with this and going beyond mere passive participation is the right for people with disabilities “to develop and utilise their creative, artistic and intellectual potential” (CRPD, 2007, Art. 30, § 2). Access to cultural institutions should thus be analysed in the context of accessibility, that is, to what extent these can be used by all people without restriction and without outside help (Gerland, 2017, p. 7).

This contribution, “INARTdis – Artistic education for all”, presents the results of an empirical survey conducted as part of an international research project. This project describes how artistic institutions can be made accessible to all people. The Erasmus+ project INARTdis explores the research question: What does a comprehensive and inclusive artistic education look like from the perspective of teachers and stakeholders (Sanahuja Gavaldà, 2019)? We report on opportunities and barriers to social inclusion in the arts from the perspectives of teachers and museum staff.

For the analysis of inclusive approaches to arts education, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Pedagogues from inside and outside of schools, as well as individuals from art and cultural institutions, participated in the study. To collect data, questionnaires (n=113), interviews (n=17), and three focus group discussions (n=21) were used. The results report on characteristics of inclusive arts education and identify factors that facilitate and inhibit the implementation of inclusive arts projects.

Keywords

Inclusive arts education, accessibility in museums, participation in art and art education

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1 The Arts and inclusion

The right of people with disabilities to participate in cultural life is ensured by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2007, Art. 30, § 1), which Austria ratified in 2008. In order to go beyond merely passive participation, people with disabilities should be able “to develop and utilise their creative, artistic and intellectual potential” (CRPD, 2007, Art. 30, § 2). Both the participatory and the actively creative aspects of cultural participation are thus clearly anchored in and regulated by law.

Art and cultural institutions are important places for educational encounters and informal recreational activities, meaning they are places that must grapple with cultural and self-determined participation. In this context – and against a backdrop of great heterogeneity in terms of affiliation, life situation and developmental conditions – museums and cultural institutions must provide an accessible, fully inclusive and self-determined education (Folta-Schoofs et al., 2017, p. 21).

According to Hinz (2002), for all people to successfully participate in art and cultural institutions, different external and internal aspects must be considered, all of which must be implemented organisationally, methodically and in terms of personnel. There are three essential conditions for success in this regard. First and foremost, barriers to creating general accessibility (both physical and communicative) must be overcome. Second, internal barriers must also be overcome, and a variety of different perceptual possibilities can open up. In this context, presenting information in plain language, ensuring the information is presented through various perception channels, and making it possible to actively engage with the exhibition objects are essential. Finally, a sense of belonging must be created through a broad representation of society’s diversity. Showing this heterogeneity in an appreciative manner and having it reflected within the museum is the task – and thus a condition for success – of an inclusive methodology (Hinz, 2002).

Individual differences should also be taken into account without categorising and assigning people to a certain group (Folta-Schoofs et al., 2017, p. 17). The added value of such expanded accessibility to art and culture will be felt and experienced by all museum visitors who will benefit from the possibility of this larger field of experience (Maaß, 2007, p. 22). In this context, accessibility is not only used for structural design features but is also used to characterise the accessibility of information and other design-related areas of life (Auer, 2017, p. 37). Moreover, being able to have an independent experience at the museum – can it be done without assistance or only in special tours? – is important to consider when discussing participation (Gerland, 2017, p. 7).

1.1 Pedagogical processes in the arts as possibilities for inclusion

Art education can make a significant contribution to inclusion by focusing on and recognising the individual potential, resources, and development of learners during artistic, educational processes. These synergies, however, are still being overlooked and underused (Kaiser, 2020, p. 2). If these were considered more closely, art education would have the chance to stimulate the (further) development of individuals' self-motivation and self-competence while also supporting identity development (Kaiser, 2020, p. 3).

Approaches to inclusive art education must remove artistic activity from separating parallel structures that have been present in art education for a long time. "Outsider Art" or "Art brut" refer to such approaches that build on educational inequalities and artistic and aesthetic educational injustice. However, it is precisely there – where the parallel structures of support systems become a barrier to development and learning – that inclusive art education approaches will need emancipatory actions even more (Sindermann, 2018). This difference in the context of inclusive art education should not be seen as a stigmatising feature and basis of separation. Instead, it should be considered a starting point for individual and mutual learning and development (Seitz & Scheidt, 2012; Sonntag & Veber, 2014; cited in Kaiser 2020, p. 2).

Sindermann (2018) – following Engels' (2017, pp. 11–28) description of the challenges facing both artistically productive activities and receptive engagements with art – postulates four principles and requirements for inclusive art didactics, which relate to both the individual and society. The first two principles are focused on the individual: "inclusive art didactics enables subjectively meaningful aesthetic appropriation processes" (Sindermann, 2018), and it "is based on process-oriented art pedagogical diagnostics, reflection, and evaluation of the artistic learning process". Furthermore, inclusive art education's foundation is based on having an attitude that sees the potential of all learners. A focus on the community highlights the added value of learning in a heterogenous group (Sindermann, 2018). This view requires art education to undergo a change in its perspective. Moving away from a solely image-analytical-based focus – where creative skills and deficits are emphasised (Legler, 2009, p. 141, cited by Kaiser, 2020) – this new perspective focuses on artistic potential and each individual's unique perceptions and actions.

1.2 Art education in museums: Participation through active (co-)design

Art education in museums tries to combine the content of art and museum education. This is successful when art pedagogies are used to support the meta-level engagement with a piece of art during its creation. Museum education looks at art through an object, while art education views the "aesthetic object" as a means and possibility of communication (Hofmann, 2016, p. 8). Hofmann (2016, p. 9) uses the term "educational art communication" to describe the pedagogical process in museums. The concepts of art education – usually understood as purely (uni)directional communication – and art reception –

understood as the largely passive and silent viewing of art (work) – do not live up to this process.

2 Research project INARTdis

Below, we present our research project, “INARTdis – artistic education for all”. Not only does the project describe how art and museum education can be used for social inclusion, but it is also an example of how this can be done. Ensuring cultural participation makes a significant contribution to improving educational opportunities and the development of identity. INARTdis thus contributes to UN Convention’s (CRPD, 2007) implementation goals. The project is an international cooperation between six educational institutions from Austria, Germany, North Macedonia, Portugal and Spain (Sanahuja Gavaldà, 2019).

2.1 Project description

Since the end of 2020, this three-year EACEA project (nr. 621441-EPP-1-2020-1-ES-EP-PA3-IPI-SOC-IN) – which is funded by Erasmus+ – has been led by Dr. Joseph Maria Sanahuja Gavaldà from the Free University of Barcelona (Sanahuja Gavaldà, 2019). This European partnership does not just promote the internationalisation of teaching and research, but it also contributes to the professional development of all groups involved (researchers, teachers, educators, and staff in cultural institutions). The University College of Teacher Education Styria’s project team consists of experts from different fields, including inclusion, participation, human rights, and art and culture.

Each project partner cooperates with one or more partner institutions from the field of art and culture. In Graz, this is the Universalmuseum Joanneum, which is led by Angelika Vauti-Scheucher. Since 2016, she has been the head of the “Participation and Inclusion” department at the museum. This department, like the INARTdis project, promotes *inclusion* as a human right to social and cultural participation and sees *participation* as a model with which new approaches to art and culture can be developed in a dialogical process.

In the first joint work phase (January to August 2021) of the project, we surveyed teachers’ and museum staff’s views on the needs, possibilities and obstacles for the social inclusion of people with disabilities in the field of art and culture. This section focuses on the following research question: *What do teachers and stakeholders understand as a comprehensive, inclusive arts education?* Below, we address how museums could be made more easily accessible for people with disabilities and the perceived challenges of doing this.

2.2 *Research methodology, data, and analysis instruments*

The analysis of inclusive access to cultural institutions and arts education was conducted in the summer semester of 2021 in the eastern part of Austria with quantitative and qualitative methods in a mixed-method design (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 105). The first group surveyed were teachers from schools and pedagogues from outside of schools, along with employees and managers from the fields of art and culture. A second group – which will participate in the project at a later date – consists of people with disabilities and their caregivers. The instruments used for the first survey were questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The questionnaire had 62 items: single-choice questions, scaling questions (from 1 = very negative to 10 = very positive), and open-ended questions. The final questionnaire was created after a pre-testing, multi-stage discussion process within the partnership had taken place. The interview guideline followed the same development process. Its final version took the qualitative results of the questionnaire into account.

Due to the pandemic, the surveys were conducted exclusively online. The online survey was sent out via the contact list of the University College and the Universalmuseum Joanneum, and 113 people responded. The majority of those who answered the questionnaire were women (78.35%), most were between 51 and 60 years old (about 33%). Most responses (50.4%) came from employees in the field of arts and culture, followed by those from socio-educational enterprises (21.2%). 14.2% came from primary school teachers. The remaining participants were teachers from secondary schools and special schools, as well as those working in assisted living care. 48 people (47.5%) had experience with inclusion in the arts. Only 18.6% had completed further training in the field of “inclusion and art”. Open-ended answers from questionnaires were mainly analysed descriptively and then categorised.

Interviews and focus group discussions were used in the qualitative survey. The 17 interviews were conducted online by master’s students. The three focus group discussions with 21 participants were held as video conferences. During the selection of the interview partners and while creating the focus group discussions, emphasis was placed on the different professional backgrounds and experiences of the interviewees. Seven interviewees were active in school-based inclusion and five were active in inclusion outside the school context. Another five people were interviewed as representatives of the arts and culture sector. The three focus groups had diverse participants. In total, ten people spoke for the school-based field of inclusion, three people for inclusion outside the school context, and eight people for the cultural field. This allowed different professional perspectives to be present in the discussions. 45% of the qualitative data came from people in the school-based professional field, 21% from people outside of the school context, and 34% from people in the field of art and culture.

The first topic of the interview guide centred on the specific characteristics of inclusive art projects, explicitly asking about perceived facilitating factors and barriers to the implementation of inclusive art projects. The guiding question for the focus groups also related to the definition of an inclusive art project (“*What do you understand by an inclusive art project?*”). Conversations were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In order to create deductive and inductive categories, all conversations were analysed with qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (2014, p. 104) with MAXQDA. The main categories were derived deductively from the interview guidelines. Subcategories were created through inductive analysis. In order to ensure intersubjectivity during the categorisation process, two people (for the most part) were involved in each case and categorised the transcripts independently of each other (Mayring, 2014, p. 108).

3 Results: The concept of inclusive arts education

The results presented below are from questionnaire sections and from interview or focus group data. First, results about the general characteristics of inclusion in arts education are given. Then, results about perceived facilitating factors and barriers to the implementation of inclusive art projects are presented.

3.1 Characteristics of inclusive art projects

From the interviewees’ perspective, inclusion means that everyone can participate in social life and education and the needs of all people are taken into account. This means questioning and changing existing systems as well as adapting them to the needs of individuals. Inclusion thus means being able to participate in society, having mutual respect, equal footing in interactions, and the opportunity to experience self-efficacy and accessibility at all levels. A person with a disability must have the same opportunities as a person without a disability. Individuals must be able to shape their own lives and to decide what type of assistance they need.

People with disabilities must also be present in politics and in the media (e.g., as newscasters, in advertising or in social media). This would show that disability is normal. This requires inclusion to be considered a norm from the very beginning, starting in pre-school and school. According to the interviewees, people with disabilities are becoming increasingly visible not only in the economic sector but also outside of it, including in museums. It would be ideal if inclusion, participation and disability were no longer topics to be addressed separately. A museum visit for people with disabilities should be as self-evident as it is for parents with children.

In art, disability should not play a role. The person who created the artwork should be in the foreground, not the disability. People associate Van Gogh and Beethoven, for exam-

ple, with their artwork and not with the disability they had. Art should then be at the forefront of the public inclusion debate as well. The contemporary art world is very open about this. The debate about inclusion challenges the utilitarian principle. It also raises questions about how lives can best be lived in dignity.

Inclusive art projects distinguish themselves as being accessible to all participants. Barrier-free accessibility to cultural institutions must be budgeted for. Educational activities must be multimodal and easily accessible. Everyone should be able to interact with the art in a self-determined and independent way. This is based on a broad concept of inclusion and emphasises the added value of inclusive design for all. Art, more than any other field, allows for absolute equality and equal rights. In this context, professionals work with professionals. Art speaks for itself. It should not matter who created the artwork. Art defines itself and, at the same time, is defined by the observer.

The goal of art is to make the best of people's diversity and create a diverse world from it. It is about including all people in social life, understanding each other, and enhancing mutual exchange and learning. To achieve this, people cannot live segregated from one another. Inclusion thus must start very early in the educational system and in childcare facilities. There is no alternative to inclusion in schools. An inclusive art project is inclusive from its conception to its reception. It is based on active co-creation and co-determination. Anyone who might be interested in the project must have the opportunity to participate in the museum as well. In this sense, art projects have an educational mission for society.

3.2 Characteristics that facilitate inclusive art projects

According to responses from the questionnaire, several aspects can help facilitate the implementation of inclusive art projects. Because multiple responses were given, 193 statements were analysed. These can be found in the diagram below (see figure 1).

49 answers referred to the characteristics of the art project itself. The way the project is implemented determines whether inclusion can reach a satisfactory level. Factors that lead to success include forming small groups, keeping events short, adapting them to the participants, and implementing projects that encourage creativity, free experimentation, and curiosity.

43 responses mentioned the availability of materials and infrastructure, while 24 responses emphasised the importance of having enough people (human resources) available for support. Moreover, a multidisciplinary, motivated team – working in fair working conditions – should be available from the start of an art project onwards. 19 answers indicated that people must be ready to recognise and appreciate diversity. Likewise, 19 other responses highlighted the importance of economic or financial resources.

Elements that facilitate inclusive art projects

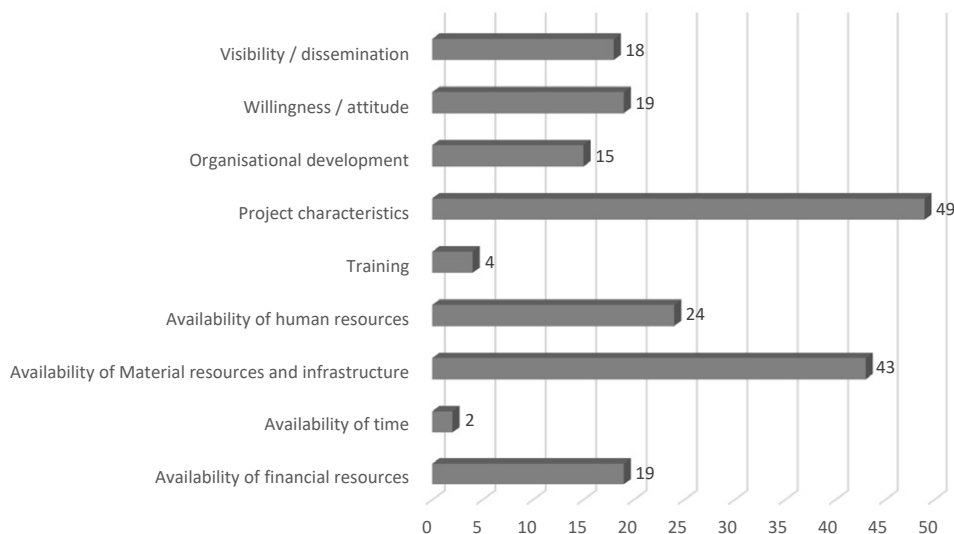


Figure 1: Characteristics that facilitate inclusive art projects (n=193)

The graph also shows that 18 responses referred to the visibility and public dissemination of inclusive art projects. Here, respondents noted that it is necessary to plan how the project will be advertised and how it will be disseminated in (social) media to various target groups. 15 responses mentioned the organisational development of the cultural institution relating to internal and external communication. The remaining answers brought up the importance of preparatory training for the people involved as well as providing sufficient time for projects.

Responding to individual needs is also essential. From the school perspective, school principals' support and parents' acceptance are both important. Labelling, attributing and comparing performance all hinder inclusion. The interviewees described the inclusion of people with disabilities as a win-win situation for all involved. It not only leads to goal-oriented measures for those affected, but it also increases awareness and a deeper understanding of all people's needs.

The museum itself must be the driving force behind including people with disabilities as experts. This includes raising awareness about participation among all who work at the museum – from the cleaning staff and those at the visitor centre to the technical staff, the art educators, and management. In project development, the internal perspective of artists and the needs of the groups for whom a programme is being developed must be coordinated from the outset. Art exhibitions, for example, should not only be designed from an aesthetic point of view. They must also consider the different needs of visitors.

Accessibility (in its spatial sense) and possibilities for adaptation are important to mention here. Cultural participation must be possible for everyone regardless of age, life stage or developmental prerequisites. Curators must make this possible.

The website must also be designed to be accessible. It must contain as much information as possible so that it is clear whether an exhibition is accessible or not. An individual should not have to contact the museum for this information. The museum, as a space for art, can also mediate between the public and the groups that have so far been less visible. For participation to become part of the museum's self-image, this group must first be made visible. The focus here should be on making different needs visible and acknowledging the equal value of each individual's needs. The time needed for this process should be taken into account during the project's design stage.

Everyone can experience what art has to offer if the artwork itself appeals to several different senses. Curators, for example, should clarify from the outset which artworks blind people can touch. Regularly scheduled tours and tours for specific target groups need to operate within the concept of *universal design for all*. Since most people enjoy using several senses, having a multisensory exhibition is beneficial. All visitors benefit from "hands-on" stories. Other key features are being able to adapt structures to various needs: seating in the exhibition rooms, guidance systems, induction loops, differentiated audio guides, display case designs (e. g., art objects visible for wheelchair users, tactile models, panoramic models), text design (e. g., plain language, font size, text-background contrast, lighting for texts, text placed at a legible height for wheelchair users). To do this, museums need a person who focuses on these adaptations and can offer advice on this process. Moreover, museums also need art educators who can lead guided tours for specific target groups and find solutions to individual issues that arise. Ideally, every museum should have an office for inclusion and participation in which people with disabilities could work and bring their perspectives to the foreground, visible to all who visit. The interviewees also mentioned other strategies that have been successful, including tandem tours and target group-specific programmes with specially trained cultural educators or free admission for personal assistants.

In addition, specific technical measures are needed for individual target groups. For people with a cochlear implant, for instance, a fixed or mobile induction system should be standard in museums. This would let deaf people participate in museums. Ideally, what individual target groups need should be articulated by the affected people themselves.

Regarding artistic or creative processes, the interviewees emphasised that everyone could learn and express themselves creatively. Art creates a space to experience oneself as independent, bearing in mind that not everyone has to participate in the same way. Through art, individuals can shape and change their surroundings, which is a basic human need. Beforehand, though, several things need to be considered, including how the end goal can

be achieved or the final product made, which sensory channels need to be addressed and which technical aids need to be used.

Part of every creative process is making mistakes and being able to restart the process. The resource is the creative act itself. It is a constant give and take, where the artist gives something to the audience and gets something in return. Joint products, in particular, have an inclusive effect when each individual can contribute in their own way. During art projects, the motivation to participate is particularly high. Artistic activities promote identity and self-confidence.

From the outset, it is critical the process is designed to be autonomous. All on one's own, it must be possible to sketch, choose the material and the tools to use, and decide how much time is needed for all of it. What is needed is a culture that brings people together who want to experiment with one another and one that creates a space where everyone can be themselves. This requires acceptance, tolerance, openness, appreciation, and a rejection of performance comparisons and evaluation. It is also important to be able to go public with the objects.

When it comes to the goals of inclusive art, according to the participants, a distinction must be made between product-oriented and process-oriented projects ("*participatory art means art that only happens in interaction with the audience*"). While these differ in their focus on the result, they both have the potential to initiate discussion and promote inclusion. Openness to various outcomes is also mentioned in this context. Art(work) can be the result, but it does not have to be. The overarching goal must be to evoke positive emotions in the participants. What each person takes away from an art project is different. "*Art always opens up a broad spectrum [...] and it is always so open that different people can take away very different things.*"

To summarise this section, inclusive art projects can and should spark interest in art, and they should also be open to all who wish to participate.

3.3 Perceived barriers to inclusive art projects

This section now presents respondents' opinions regarding aspects that can hinder the development of inclusive art projects. In 288 individual responses to the questionnaire (multiple answers), numerous obstacles were mentioned that prevent art and culture from being fully accessible and participatory for all people.

As can be seen in the graphic below (figure 2), most statements (98) referred to missing infrastructure. Here, participants pointed to architectural barriers (both natural and artificial), limited accessibility and a lack of suitable spaces as issues that can affect the positive development of an art project.

57 statements referred to barriers related to the concept of inclusion and associated prejudices towards it. Various reasons were given, including a lack of awareness regarding how to interact with people with disabilities and limited awareness regarding their needs. They also pointed to fear, prejudice, ignorance, an absence of information, segregation, and a lack of inclusive thinking as factors that can hinder the development of inclusive art projects.

A number of 33 responses alluded to the organisational practices of cultural institutions, citing a lack of prioritisation and ambiguities in management. Particular issues are vague policies, ambiguity in internal and external communication or during project planning, and an inability or unwillingness to make programmes more flexible.

29 responses pointed out that a lack of human resources can also hinder the development of inclusive art projects. In particular, participants emphasised the lack of specialised and trained personnel, both in the field of special education and in the arts.

Additional 27 statements connected inaccessibility to issues of funding (limited investment, lack of economic support), which was partly reflected in the high cost of cultural activities. 16 responses referred to a lack of time also being a problem.

The remaining responses highlighted the lack of material resources, especially inclusive didactic ones. Respondents also noted that social barriers are a relevant limitation (e.g.,

Barriers to the implementation of inclusive art projects

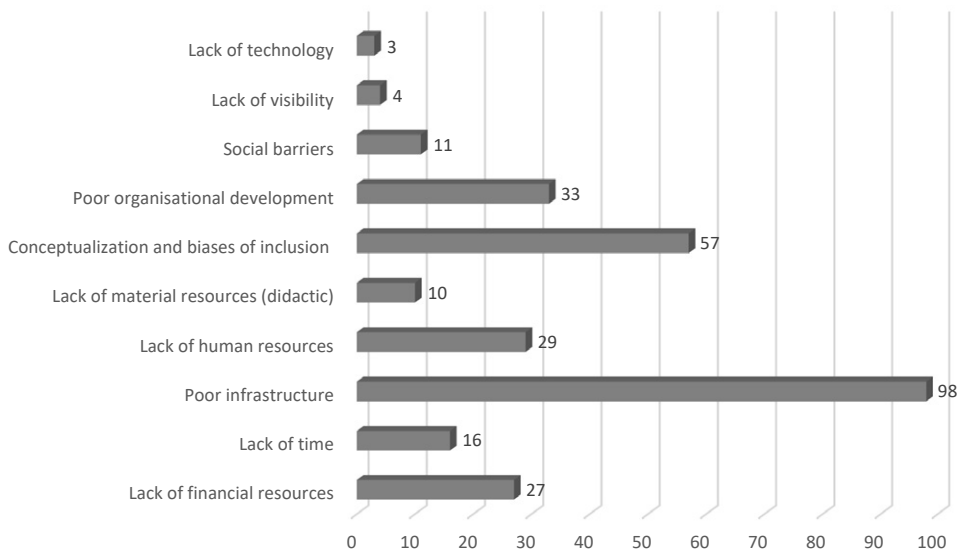


Figure 2: Perceived barriers to inclusive art projects (n=288)

lack of information about benefits, limited interest from the public, closed-off nature of the art world, and difficulty in understanding art).

According to the qualitative analysis of the interviews, those who want to participate should not fail because of barriers. Accessibility is a human right and not a matter of goodwill. In Austria, this has yet to be fully implemented. Museums, even if they are trying to find ways to mitigate barriers, are still spaces that exclude. For accessibility to be achieved, people must be made aware of these barriers. Then, they can help remove them.

Space itself can be a barrier, for example, due to the size of the room or the furniture. According to the interviewees, barriers are mostly spatial in nature. To reduce these barriers, an employee from the visitor centre should go through the space with a wheelchair to point out these issues. In historic buildings, however, it is not always possible to create accessibility spaces due to spatial conditions and/or the requirements of the government.

Furthermore, art itself can be a barrier (e.g., video productions with rapid cuts that can trigger cerebral seizure disorders). Attention needs to be given to these hazards. Therefore, a focus solely on structural accessibility falls short. The language used can also be a barrier to mutual understanding. While the language in the cultural sector tends to be elaborate and complex, written and spoken texts should be easily understandable. Raising awareness here is needed.

Budgetary constraints are also obstacles. In order to break down financial barriers, the museum lobby should be free of charge. The museum must lose the aura of elitism. In addition, in the school context, financial constraints can impede art projects, particularly for children with migrant backgrounds. Time is another barrier: School schedules (classes based on subjects), care and support staff schedules, and different working speeds can all hinder inclusive arts teaching.

3.4 Summary

The mixed-methods approach and the inclusion of different professional groups' perspectives provided a broad, detailed picture of the project's research question of what inclusive arts education is. The twofold focus – on the accessibility of museums for people with disabilities and on the inclusive design of art education programmes – broadens the field.

The results show that the respondents also understand inclusive art education to be a medium for public outreach for inclusion. Other characteristics of inclusive art education include accessibility for all, flexible and adaptable settings, different methodologies, the creative implementation of these with free choice of materials, sufficient time and personnel resources, and possibilities to scaffold (Hinz, 2002). Participants, however, did not mention that in addition to raising awareness in cultural institutions regarding accessibility, further efforts are needed to convince people with disabilities that cultural spaces are open to them. According to Folta-Schoofs et al. (2017, p. 98), people with disabilities,

along with various representative groups and care institutions, must first be convinced these spaces are accessible.

Nevertheless, the interviewees mentioned numerous contributions that art can make to identity development. Art can be used to promote personal and social competences, public recognition of it can increase self-esteem, and it offers a broader range of possibilities for identification (Hinz, 2002). Factors that facilitate inclusive art education include project designs, material resources, suitable infrastructure, and the availability of support personnel and personal assistants. Participants, however, mentioned more barriers to inclusive art education, which range from unsuitable infrastructures and prejudices in cultural institutions to a lack of financial and/or human resources. These findings align with other studies (Folta-Schoofs et al., 2017, p. 19).

3.5 Limitations

By using mixed methods, it was possible to not only look at the frequencies of given answers but, with the qualitative interview data, also to evaluate and extend the initial findings (Kuckartz, 2014, p. 57). The results, however, should not be considered representative. Questionnaire participants were chosen at random, and their biographies do not reflect the demographic reality of their occupations.

Moreover, participants for both the guided interviews and the focus groups were chosen according to their experience and knowledge in the researched field. This resulted in minimal points of disagreement between them. The results are therefore not transferable to other contexts.

The data analyses were carried out in the context of the questions and categories formulated for the overall project, which is a limitation in itself. In addition, the next step in the project – to present the perspectives of people with disabilities and their assistants – has not yet taken place. As of now, these perspectives are absent in this chapter.

3.6 Next steps

The next goal of the project is to analyse access to cultural institutions and artistic education for people with disabilities from their own perspectives. The survey will be conducted from the perspective of people with disabilities and their assistants in accordance with the Strategic Framework for the Implementation of the CRPD (2007). The status of the research project is available at: www.inartdis.eu.

The final phase of the project will focus on designing, implementing and evaluating the training courses in the museums. Training materials for professionals will also be created. The results will be presented to the public in exhibitions, workshops and documentaries. When the project is over, a guide for creating inclusive art and museum spaces will be made available for museums and schools.

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