

Moving for mental health

#STAYACTIVE



Ebooklet

Youth Exchange

01 - 10/04/2024
ŠIBENIK, CROATIA

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



AGENCY FOR
MOBILITY AND
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ARGONAUTA

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MISSION

“Moving for Mental Health” project will bring young people to Croatia to work together in mental health through dancing and sports. The main goal of this project is to bring 35 young people and 7 group leaders from 7 different countries to inspire each other with methods for improving their personal well-being and share them in their local communities. The goal is to raise their awareness about the current state of mental health in their communities and boost their emotional and physical state through learning how to use their body more effectively and creatively. This will foster social engagement and active participation of the young people involved in this project.



OBJECTIVES



Promote cultural diversity, giving them the opportunity to learn about other cultures while living and working in mixed nationalities.

Raise awareness about the current mental health of young people through the exploration of experiences in their local communities, reducing the stigma about taboo topics.

Reflect on the effect that body movement has on physical wellbeing, overcoming negative attitudes as well as boosting confidence and self-esteem of the participants.



DAY 1

The first working day was dedicated to various group activities such as icebreakers and energizers to foster camaraderie among the participants. After a short break, the group dove into the second workshop, engaging in an animated "Mission Impossible" game. Challenges ranged from completing 1000 squats to creating humorous images and even learning languages. Following the game, a hearty lunch ensued, after which the group collectively drafted community guidelines and rules while openly discussing their apprehensions and aspirations for the youth exchange. As the sun set, festivities continued with a Croatian-themed welcome party, marked by a Kahoot quiz centered on Croatia's culture.



DAY 2

After a delightful breakfast, participants started the second day in the activity room with North Macedonian's workshop about dance, sports and cultural identity. Afterwards, the Greek workshop followed, about Mindfulness Movement, through yoga and meditation. After a lunch break, they gathered again outside for the Spanish workshop about dance, sport and emotional regulation. Then they took some time for reflection on the workshops and while others rested before dinner, group leaders had their daily meeting. The day ended with the Spanish and Portuguese intercultural night.



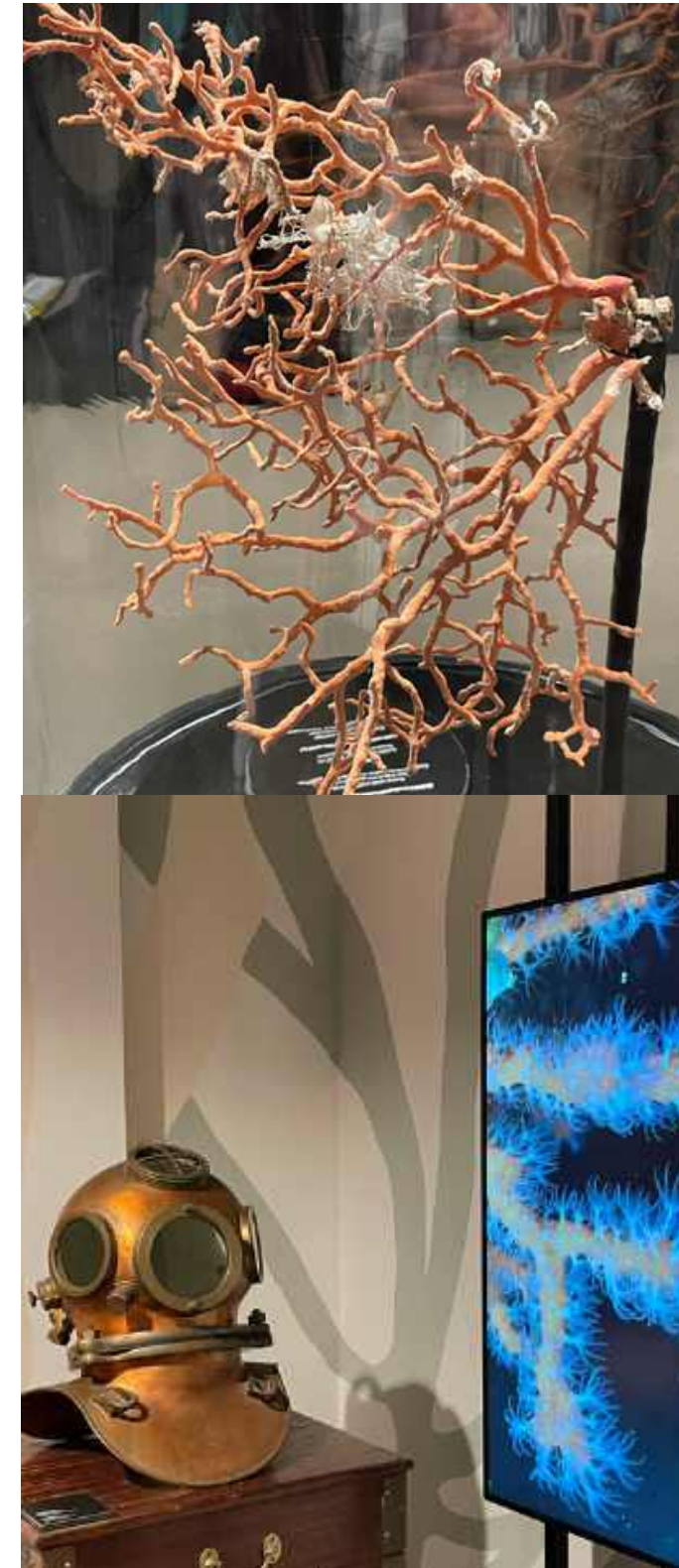
DAY 3

Participants started the day by discussing how to improve their well-being status in their countries. The Croatian team started their workshop with an energizer. Then, participants were divided in groups and had to create sketches about how sports affects their mental health status. The last activity was a reflection about what they are grateful about the day. After lunch, Turkish team started their workshop with an energizer outside. Secondly, a game called maze was implemented to build group dynamic. Thirdly, to improve leadership skills, human knot activity was held. Afterwards, Portuguese team started their workshop about stress management and movement. Firstly, participants shared their handicaps about sports and expressed their feelings. Secondly, capoeira activity was held. Lastly, breathing stress management exercise was implemented. In the evening, Greece and North Macedonia organized cultural nights with traditional drinks, food and dances.



DAY 4

The fourth day started early to go to Zlarin Island. The group walked to Šibenik Port and took a ferry. After the very pleasant journey, the group divided in two: one part first went to visit Zlarin, while the other went to the Coral Museum to learn about the history of the island, corals and tradition. They discovered as well how the corals helped the economy on the island. Later, they explored the place with a walk around the island and had a free afternoon on the beach, where they could swim, rest and play games. At night, they engaged in workshops that allowed them to connect music with mental health and imagination, following by a bachata dancing class.



DAY 5

That day started with the mid-term evaluation. Next, the Aurora organization from Šibenik came to share how they make sports accessible for people with disabilities and how these activities help with their mental health. They performed para-karate and showed the power of sports in their lives. After a short break, tiny Olympics proved that team work makes the dream work. Through working together in pairs in few disciplines, connections got stronger. To finish the day Argonauta presented the game Ecoland, and preparations of the e-booklet started. The night was an opportunity for the group to have free time and discover the night life of Šibenik .



DAY 6

Participants started the day with a hike through the beautiful nature of Šibenik to St. Nikola's Fortress. During lunch time, some of them took a nap on the deck in the middle of the sea, enjoying their free time in this peaceful place. After that, the participants reflected on the flash mob performance. On the way back, they cleaned the road with an eco-walk during which they collected trash. When they arrived at school, after a short break, they met to decide on performance tools. They had dinner, after what the Turkish and Croatian intercultural night took place.



DAY 7

Day 7 was the performance day. In the morning the team was divided into two groups, and both groups had choreography. The goal of this day was primarily to have fun, but also to cooperate together regardless of our culture differences. Cooperating with people from other countries was very fun and an unforgivable experience. After preparing the choreography, they presented in front of the St. Jacob's Cathedral. Some strangers joined them, which marked this day. Delighted with this collective performance under the setting sun, the participants shared a friendly moment, toasting this great adventure.



DAY 8

Monday was the last working day of this adventure. During the morning the participants dedicated themselves to finalizing the e-book together. Then, they were asked to brainstorm future ideas. The end of the exchange doesn't mean the end of the project, the participants have the task of using their knowledge and experience to continue spreading the message about the importance of the movement for mental health. Also, they were able to learn more about the Erasmus + program and the European Solidarity Corps thanks to a presentation by the two Argonauta volunteers Juliette and Romina. They ended the day with the Youthpass award ceremony and the final evaluation. The evening was full of emotions with the farewell party. Some left during the night, and the rest said goodbye the next morning.



Spanish workshop

Dance and sports for emotional regulation

METHODS: Guided lessons and brainstorming

The Spanish team started the workshop with an energizer called “I Can Achieve it”. The point is to repeat songs and moves with the purpose of building team spirit.

After that, the session continued outside. The group got divided in 4 lines and copied the movements showed by the instructors. The lesson was inspired by basic combat moves that are especially effective in emotional regulation.

The reflection showed a difference in the way the participants felt. Afterwards, they kept moving with zumba and Spanish tunes.

In the final reflection, the facilitators interacted with the group asking several questions about links between emotions and physical activities.



Turkish workshop

Sports For Empowerment

METHODS: Strategy development

The workshop started with a game to make participants energized while empowering sports and movement. The game begun with a person who runs and chases others, and the people who are tagged must run together holding hands.

In the first activity, to develop group dynamic between the participants, the game called ‘Maze’ was played. Its purpose is to improve coordination and teamwork within the group.

Later on, the activity ‘Human Knot’ was implemented. It aimed to develop leadership skills and communication among participants. They were asked to form circles and hold hands randomly and detangle themselves by talking and cooperating. As a second part, participants were led by a leader to show the importance of leadership skills.



Croatian workshop

Health initiatives

METHODS: Rethinking what we know about health

Croatian team started with an energizer in the circle, it was a game focused on connecting brain and body work, followed by music. For the main activity participant were divided into random groups and were given different professions. The idea was to define challenges and solutions for improving mental health in 5 different professions.

Participants were given a choice to decide the way to present the topic to other groups. Methods shown were role play, presentation and discussion. The last activity was art reflection trough which participants needed to show their daily gratitude.



Portuguese workshop

Stress management in sports

METHODS: Learning by doing

The workshop began with a brief exercise that involved the creation of pairs, later on the pairs were split and set on two parallel lines. To start the exercise the facilitators played music, when the music was stopped the pair had to run to each other and squat, the last pair to do it was eliminated. The exercise continued for multiple rounds until a winning couple arose.

The second part was an introduction to the Capoeira, a martial art/dance originally invented by enslaved people in Brazil during the colonialist times. Since Capoeira was created in a situation of stress, the team decided to present it to the group - plus, the community feeling that Capoeira can offer, aligned with the movement can be a plus on the participants mental health.

Andre taught the basic movements: ginga (passive position), one attack and one defense moves.

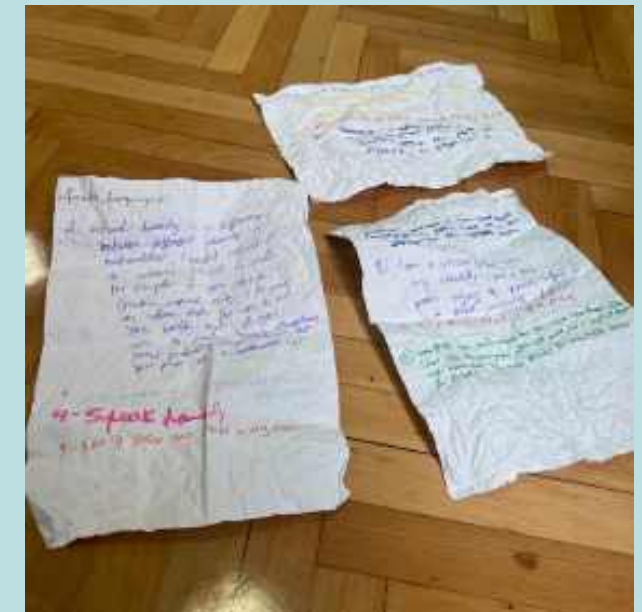


North Macedonian workshop

Cultural diversity and Traditional Dance

METHODS: Appreciating cultures and traditions

The Macedonian workshop started with an introduction into the meaning of Cultural diversity and Traditional Dance. The energizer “Guess the leader” was a fun cooperative game where a person has to find who the leader is in a big circle of people following his actions. The first game was snowball fight with answer sheets. The questions were about individual identity and cultural diversity. Macedonian team commented about some of the answers and found out about other people’s opinions, their identities and cultural backgrounds in and out of their country. And lastly we did traditional dance activities in groups and learned traditional dances of other countries with a community dance-off. We got a very positive feedback from the groups, everyone was feeling excited, full of energy and happy that they learned a new dance.



Greek workshop

Exploring Yoga, Meditation and breathing exercises

METHODS: Guided meditation and Yoga

We started the session with a small energizer that helped with expressing feelings in a funny and ice breaking way. That was followed with a presentation about yoga and its origins, and meditation and how it can contribute in our mental health. The next activity was an interactive guided meditation session that helped everyone relax and express feelings through specific instructions and following the mantra “I’m loved”. Furthermore, a mini-yoga session was conducted following the instructions of the trainer to feel energized again and channel inner feelings through this exercise. The feedback of the group was great and all people felt relaxed and said that they felt many different things.



Interviews



What brings you here ?

“I heard about this type of projects from Erasmus + and I was looking for one that I could really enjoy and I saw this, that was about sport and dance for mental health, and I just love this theme so I join it.” - **Sara (Spain)**

“Actually, I thought a lot about that ‘Should I go ? I don’t know...’. It was a really hard question for me to go there, because I don’t have a lot of confidence. But then I think that I can develop my confidence here and develop my social skills by meeting a lot of people and it brings me here !” - **Zeynep (Türkiye)**

“I’ve seen some of my friends coming to these Erasmus projects, they had a lot of fun so I said to them ‘how can I join ?’, then they sent me a link and I applied. After some time, I got an invitation, I accepted it and I’m here having fun, like they said !” - **Mario (North Macedonia)**

“At first, I knew about the program because my best friend applied for it, so I thought it was a really good idea to come together here. And then I read the theme of the program and I really liked it because mentally I wasn’t stable and in a good position before I came here.” - **Nasia (Greece)**

Interviews



What were your expectations for joining this project ?

“I was hoping first of all to have a lot of fun ; to dance a lot, obviously ; to be in touch with nature during outdoor activities. And actually, that is matching reality because we’re having a lot of fun outdoors, we are doing and trying a lot of activities regarding team building, many kinds of sports and also a lot of dancing !” - **Katarina (Portugal)**

“For the last year, I haven’t done much exercise so it was for me a chance to rediscover the benefits of it, especially the mental ones which is the focus of the project and maybe collaborate with other people and do some new activities sports.” - **Ioannis (Greece)**

“My expectations were that I will learn something new, that I will connect and make some new friends and have fun.” - **Petra (Croatia)**

Interviews



What did you learn here ?

“I’ve learned a lot from the workshops from all the other countries like some traditional dances or mindfulness. I learned a lot of new words in other languages, it’s so funny.” - **Sara (Spain)**

“I’m still searching about my own mental health issues and discovering myself everyday, but during this project I’ve learned a lot of things about me through others and through other people's opinions and problems that they shared with me.” - **Nikos (Greece)**

“I think it was really hard for me to face my problems and read them and not just put them under the carpet. And here we had plain of time and we talked about it and I started to face it. Although it’s difficult, I know that in the end it’s going to be better by facing it.” - **Nasia (Greece)**

“Yes from the national nights for sure, I didn’t know many of the stuff from the presentation and also the general culture, the way of behaving, talking, it was really interesting for me. And from the workshops, the mental benefits of activities I hadn’t try before like yoga, meditation, dancing.” - **Ioannis (Greece)**

Interviews



Do you think that this experience will make you change your habits related to sports and dances ?

“Yes of course, I've learned a lot of dances, I learned how to dance bachata and I will use it a lot when I'll go home in North Macedonian, I will teach my friends too. “ - **Mario (North Macedonia)**

“I realized that I need to do activities more because it helps me to feel more energetic, more happy. And I realized also that the group work makes me happy cause I love speaking with a lot of people and leadership skills. It really changed my life actually, I was so happy to realize that and when I'll come back to home I will do much more sport activities with my friends.” - **Zeynep (Türkiye)**

“Probably I will start preferring more outdoor activities because I love the weather and how it feels to be outside during activities. It's something I don't usually do because I workout in a closed gym and now I have motivation to do that.” - **Nikos (Greece)**

“I learned some ways to do it quicker and to put it in my own time schedule, so it will be batter for me after the project. “ - **Petra (Croatia)**

Learning outcomes



During the exchange, we learned to regulate our emotions through dance and combat sports. Discovering empowerment through sports, particularly in a team setting, strengthened our group spirit. We developed skills to take initiative in our work, in communal spaces, and with friends, as well as how to motivate others to get moving. We also learned to manage stress and anxiety using breathing techniques, yoga, meditation, and capoeira. Finally, we enriched our understanding of different cultures through traditional dances and the diversity of the countries represented.

These skills are extremely useful in daily life. Regulating emotions through dance and sports helps in stress management conflicts. Empowerment through sports boosts self-confidence and team spirit, which are essential in professional and social settings. The ability to take initiative and motivate others improves efficiency at work and group dynamics. Additionally, managing stress and anxiety through breathing, yoga, and meditation promotes overall well-being, while understanding different cultures enhances social and professional interactions.

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