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Innovation in inclusive museums education and training through an online pilot course

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Abstract— One pilot course has been developed as an Open Online Course on Inclusive Museum for Health and Well-being within the framework of the Erasmus+ European project INCLUSIVE MEMORY (Inclusive Museums for well-being and health through the creation of a new shared memory). The course was designed to reach out to a wide audience of participants, starting from professionals in the health sector and museums, university teachers and students from art and humanistic studies. The main objective is to promote an innovative strategy for social inclusion derived from the creation of a new teaching methodology, the use of digital tools and based on the development of transversal competences to foster well-being, health, and social inclusion. To assess the feedback of the participants on the design and development of the course, as well as information on their profile, pre- and post-course surveys have been designed to gather the necessary data to reach the objectives of a research study. The initial results are presented here along with the instructional design of the pilot course and its syllabus.

Keywords— social inclusion, museum education, museum learning, digital & transversal competences

I. INTRODUCTION

Museums must transform themselves if they are to remain relevant to 21st-century audiences [1]. It is the result of the impact of new technologies and the rapid societal developments that we are all a part of and applies not just to museums but to all arts bodies and other agents of mass communication. Museums must focus on developing their audiences as regular users, are committed to participation and collaboration, bring on-site, online, and mobile provision and, through social media, build meaningful relationships with their users. Museums should encourage and pursue user engagement with collections, and the conversations and dialogues they inspire. The engaging museum of the 21st century must have a clear vision of the future that engages, stimulates, and inspires the public it serves, playing an active role in promoting tolerance and understanding within and between communities, including disfavored groups.

In this sense, a several members of the scientific body that study the social role and impact of museums [2] suggests that citizenship will engage with the concepts of

social inclusion and exclusion if museums and all the professionals involved rethink their purposes and goals pursuing to play a new role within society. Museums will become effective agents for social inclusion, changing their purpose and role if they deliver main changes in their working practices [3]. Creating a new system of social inclusion (especially for groups with protected characteristics) based on the Art-Health-Wellness link may prove to be a good practice from which health and social care institutions, cultural organizations and educational institutions across Europe can draw inspiration [4].

Museums seek to improve education and inclusion using technology, being essential to value didactic and technological advances with new ICT (Information and communications technology) tools, at an intercultural and intergenerational level, adapting the exhibition messages to the diversity of audiences, with special interest in those with disabilities. [5] conducted an updated systematic review with a selection of 511 articles to show the current elements for the development of cultural access favoring inclusion and participation avoiding exclusion. Among the conclusions they obtained, there is a need for greater knowledge on the part of the didactic teams and the training of specific staff, improving the connection with the public and delivering inclusive participative actions both in the museum and in the digital environment, providing the appropriate tools to encourage debate and critical thinking. Professionals must collaborate between institutions, to achieve significant progress in awareness, education, and real access to all audiences.

The Inclusive Memory (IM) project¹ (2021-2024) aims to promote the building of a common shared social memory realized through a museum-based social inclusive system, through the link Art-Health-Wellbeing. The core idea of the project stems from the potential benefits of the cooperation between Museums, Universities and Health and Social care Institutions, as a strategic partnership to advance museum education as well as in museum experience to support the design, realization, monitoring and evaluation of art-based activities. There is a core objective to promote actions specifically addressed to people with special needs and social care and health problems. The evidence reviewed in the Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project² showed that

¹ https://piattaformaintellect.it/portale/index.php/inclusive_memory/

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/mental-capital-and-wellbeing>

well-being is self-perpetuating and inextricably linked to health, to the extent that “*a high level of wellbeing is associated with positive functioning, which includes creative thinking, productivity, good interpersonal relationships and resilience in the face of adversity, as well as good physical health and life expectancy*”¹. There is an expanding body of research and evaluation to support the case that the arts have an important contribution to make to health and well-being.

Too often, art programs for health are temporary, and provision is uneven across the different European countries. Universities can play an important role in realizing collaboration across the systems of health, social care, and the arts. Through the reversed community approach, the Inclusive Memory project tends to stimulate processes of rebuilding troubled communities [6] through the collaboration of academics, people working professionally in health and social care as well as artists and people working in cultural organizations. The project challenges habitual thinking and asks for new collaborations to be formed across conventional boundaries.

The IM project aims at promoting an innovative strategy for social inclusion, suggesting the creation of a new teaching methodology with the use of digital tools and based on the development of transverse competences in both university teachers and museum and health professionals. The project is based on the concept which sees museums as teaching and learning environments, including Universities as active social actors, both strengthening their role of cultural integration facilitators thus promoting well-being, health, and social inclusion.

The results presented in [7] show that available research about inclusion in museum education can be classified into four categories:

- Learning refers to museum academic programs in which users learn different skills.
- Community engagement includes the development of programs specifically designed to invite and engage diverse groups of visitors in museum spaces and activities.
- Training focuses on university learning, internships, and museum staff training.
- Health therapies include articles analyzing programs devoted to people with special needs. I.e. arts therapies may be used to alleviate anxiety, depression and stress while increasing resilience and wellbeing [8].

Regarding this classification, the main objectives of the Inclusive Memory project are:

- The design and implementation of a new social inclusion system (especially for people with social care and health problems) based on the link Art-Health-Wellbeing, this may act as a best practice to draw inspiration to Health and social care institutions, cultural organizations, and educational institutions from all over Europe.
- The design of innovative learning paths for the promotion of social inclusion and the development of transversal skills for academics, future museum staff,

social caregivers, and healthcare personnel.

- The possibility to foster the organization of innovative didactic paths for health and well-being promotion in museums, also within schools and health and social care institutions with the support of the professionals who will have been properly trained on the matter. A special focus will be to compass and put in practice innovative art-based approaches dedicated to social inclusion.

The methodology applied in the IM project is based on the logic of converting the theoretical concept of Museums as inclusive spaces for Health and Wellbeing development into a practical protocol of teaching scenarios adapted to specific local communities' needs and newly created open resources (Open Educational Resources- OERs and Massive Open Online Courses -MOOCs), testing the protocol and resources into ready-to-use courses, and using the test outcomes to enrich the theoretical basis. On a methodological level, the project adopts a Design Based Research methodology, first described by [9], who conceptualized it as a cyclic process for didactic product creation. The model is developed as a process of diverse stages, known by the acronym ADDIE: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. Moreover, the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach is used for the development of art-based activities for Health and Wellbeing promotion within partners' local communities. ABCD's premise [10] is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets.

A. Open education

In 2013, the European Union launched the Opening up Education initiative², which aimed to promote the use of open educational resources and open educational practices in Europe. The initiative called for the development of a European-wide framework for open education and for the creation of a digital infrastructure to support the sharing and reuse of educational resources.

Open education refers to educational practices and resources that are freely available and accessible to anyone, without any barriers to entry such as cost or prerequisites, encompassing a variety of initiatives, including OERs, open courseware, open textbooks, and MOOCs, available freely to anyone, regardless of their educational background or qualifications. Learners can access course materials, podcasts, eBooks, and interactive simulations, watch video lectures, participate in discussions with other learners, and complete assessments at their own pace and location. These resources are designed to provide learners with a flexible and engaging way to learn about a range of subjects, regardless of their location or schedule.

Learning can be developed like LEGO bricks, with no restrictions to enroll. MOOCs have been praised for their ability to reach large numbers of learners and for their potential to transform the way education is delivered and consumed. Initially, it was thought that these types of courses should be delivered exclusively online, but some works defend its functional value even in a blended model [11]. This is also the approach used in the IM project since different

¹ <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_13_859

institutions coexist in the partnership, some mostly face-to-face, others mostly online.

B. Museum professional online training

Considering the evolution and impact of digital technologies in society, and consequently, in cultural organizations, changes affect museum professional's profile roles and new competences are required. [12] explored how education for museum professionals is transforming, as it responds to the need for graduates to possess digital skills and a deep knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which museums are evolving.

Moreover, research has been conducted recently in Europe showing that online training and open learning are a powerful tool to support professional life-long learning. [13] focused on the development of digital competences in the museum sector by supporting ongoing professional training in Greece, Italy and Portugal finding new job profiles. [14] developed an OER repository to support individual equipping in more than forty digital and transversal skills, offered in different formats of education and training courses (MOOC), some considering also face-to-face and work base learning contexts, building communities of practice in a blended model.

II. IM PILOT COURSE DESIGN

Directed to different disciplines – museums, education, social and health care – the IM pilot course unifies and encourages the exchange of experience through emotional memory in project result number 4. Through the notion and knowledge of one's emotions, the course proposes a museum as a platform for proposing, verifying, and practicing inclusiveness for people who feel marginalized in society or are disabled. The overall aim is to promote well-being and mental health as has been stated previously.

As end-users of the course, future museum professionals, social caregivers, schoolteachers, and healthcare personnel are trained with the pilot course to be able to exploit the potential of Museums as driving forces for social inclusion. Learners are introduced to different methods to achieve those goals through the arts, health, and intercultural understanding, proposing a visit to a museum. They are invited to contemplate the visit as an art-based activity, a laboratory, a workshop, or an installation, where communication is achieved employing verbal or non-verbal language, photography, literature, tactic materials and/or technological programs.

A. Pilot course instructional design

The IM pilot course is based on the social model of disability and the design 4all approach. Everyone has an equal right to culture and visit museums. Learners reflect on how to build up a dialogue and trust relationships as a path to inclusion; how museums represent cultural heritage and how protected characteristics groups could represent themselves in a museum when co-designing an inclusive museum visit.

At the end of the course, learners should realize that an Inclusive Museum for Health and Wellbeing extends its benefits to all members of society. The pilot course is filled to the brim with practical examples, in the form of an open online course. In online learning, learners should be continually influenced by information, social interaction, and learning experiences, providing them with the knowledge to come up with new ideas to develop. The instructional design is based

on Gagne's events of instruction as in other previous authors' work [15].

[16] proposed a series of events which follow a systematic instructional design process that shares the behaviorist approach to learning, with a focus on the outcomes or behaviors of instruction. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory [17] argued that the broad spectrum of learners would be better served if disciplines could be presented in a different number of ways and learning could be assessed through a variety of means with the process of making learning a realistic experience and making real connections with the context. Regarding the context of the proposed training in the project, the selected learning styles [18] for the IM pilot course are:

- **Interpersonal.** Refers to the understanding, and the interaction with other peers. Learners learn through interaction, fostering empathy for others and are taught through group activities and dialogues.
- **Intrapersonal.** Refers to each person's interests and goals. Learners must concentrate on their feelings, intuition, and motivation, may deliver a strong will, confidence, and show their opinions. Students are taught through independent study and introspection.
- **Linguistic.** This topic refers to the effective use of words and linguistic narrative. Learners enjoy reading, playing word games and making up stories. Students can be taught to do so by encouraging them to write essays.
- **Visual-Spatial.** Learners are aware of their environments. They like to do puzzles, drag and drop, and view 360° images.

Specifically, [19] present a set of principles drawn from the learner's perspective for the case of online courses. In the paper, authors focus on the process of empowering learners in networked environments, fostering critical thinking and collaboration, developing competency-based outcomes, encouraging peer assistance and assessment through social appraisal, providing strategies and tools for self-regulation, and finally using a variety of media to create and publish learning resources and outputs.

With all the above, the IM pilot course learning design is detailed in Table I and flows as follows:

1. The pilot course starts with an introduction that focuses on the challenges that face museums in the 21st century, including basic concepts of inclusion and well-being. At this point, learners are incentivized to show up in the forum and exchange their feelings and expectations at the beginning of the course, the content, and their previous knowledge.
2. Some interviews with experts show the appliance to positive education through video-based case studies that illustrate practice in different types of museums.
3. Learners are suggested to elucidate on the sense of well-being and its relation to museums.
4. The barriers that users with disabilities face are presented and learners are led to reflect on empathy with the disfavored users, filling in an empathy map and interviewing one disabled user in their nearby.
5. A full unit about the use of technology in museums is developed, showing examples of innovative ICTs that can be also accessible and can play an important role towards the definition of inclusive activities.

6. Finally, the learner is encouraged to develop their accessible activity focusing on a specific exclusion group, about the empathy map they have constructed.

B. Learning Outcomes

At the end of the pilot course, learners can:

- Apply their acquired knowledge and developed competences to redefine the value of museums from within the personal, social, and physical motivating factors (ABCD approach).
- Identify professional and soft skills that make museums more inclusive.
- Recognize projects where the benefits of Art-Health-Wellbeing are evident.
- Create a museum experience where well-being is addressed 4all.
- Connect artwork with the visitors' condition/life story.

Regarding professional skills, at the end of the course, the learners should:

- Understand the ABCD approach (Asset-based community development).

- Have obtained protected characteristic knowledge.
- Adopt an approach that bears in mind the social model of disability.
- Know psychological resources and strengths that promote people's well-being and inclusive relationship with a museum's experience.
- Co-design Museum experiences at different local entities.
- Involve social groups with protected characteristics.
- Create evaluation tools.

At the same time, transverse skills are expected to be achieved:

- Manage the 4C skills (Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking).
- Show flexibility.
- Embrace empathy.
- Build up collaboration.
- Increase cultural awareness.
- Be able to apply digital skills to a museum context.

TABLE I. GARDNER'S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES PRODUCT GRID MAPPING WITH LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND MATERIALS FOR THE PILOT COURSE ADJUSTED TO GAGNÉ'S NINE EVENTS OF INSTRUCTION

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES			
GARDNER'S LEARNING STYLE	LEARNING ACTIVITIES	TEACHING MATERIALS	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES (A – N, Activity) (T – N, Assessment test) (G – N, Gagne's event)
General information about the course			(G.2) Inform learners of the objectives of the course, the outcomes and the assessment methods (G.5) Digital facilitating to interact with the e-learning platform and tools
Unit 1. Introduction to the Course and Definition of Basic Concepts on Inclusion and Wellbeing (3 hours)			
Spatial	Visual presentations	Video presentations	(A.1) 5 Video-pills (G.4) Present the course
Linguistic	Read about it, write about it	Source documents on the web	(A.2) Forum participation "Let's share course expectations" (G.5) Provide learning guidance
Intrapersonal	Independent study	Assessment	(T.1) Self-assessment test (G.3) Stimulate recall of prior learning
Unit 2. Understanding the Basis of Human Well-Being applied to Positive Education and Art-health Experience (4 hours)			
Spatial	Visual presentations	Video presentations	(A.1) 6 Video-pills (G.4) Present the content
Intrapersonal	Individualized instruction	Feelings around selected art pieces	(A.9) Practice (G.1) Gain the attention of the learners
Intrapersonal	Individualized instruction	Chosen pieces of art reflecting well-being	(A.9) Practice (G.9) Real-world situations
Intrapersonal	Independent study	Assessment	(T.2) Self-assessment test (G.8) Assess performance
Unit 3. Museum Education for Wellbeing and Inclusion (5 hours)			
Spatial	Visual presentations	Video presentations	(A.1) 4 Video-pills (G.4) Present the content
Intrapersonal	Individualized instruction	Activities that promote well-being in museums	(A.9) Practice (G.9) Real-world situations
Intrapersonal	Individualized instruction	Using the Empathy Map	(A.4) Social empathy, case studies (G.2) Engage to the online learning
Intrapersonal	Independent study	Assessment	(T.2) Self-assessment test (G.8) Assess performance
Unit 4. Best practices at Museum for Inclusion and Wellbeing based on the Use of Technology (5 hours)			
Spatial	Visual presentations	Video presentations	(A.1) 6 Video-pills (G.4) Present the content
Intrapersonal	Individualized instruction	Preferred Technologies	(A.9) Practice (G.9) Real-world situations
Linguistic	Discussion	Source documents on the web	(A.8) Debate, forum participation (G.5) Provide learning guidance
Spatial	Visual presentations with interaction	Interactive H5P resources	(A.5) Drag and drop, hot spot images, image 360° (G.4) Present the content
Intrapersonal	Independent study	Assessment	(T.2) Self-assessment test (G.8) Assess performance

Unit 5. Plan an Inclusive Museum Visit for Wellbeing Promotion (8 hours)			
Spatial	Visual presentations with interaction	Video presentation	(A.7) 1 Video (G.4) Present the content
Linguistic	Read about it, write about it	Source documents on the web	(A.8) Debate, forum participation (G.5) Provide learning guidance
Intrapersonal	Individualized instruction	Create your assessment grid	(A.9) Practice (G.6) Elicit performance
Intrapersonal	Independent study	Assessment	(T.2) Self-assessment test (G.8) Assess performance

Note: G.1 Gain the attention of the learners by using a compelling introduction. G.2 Inform learners about the objectives and the outcomes of the course. G.3 Stimulate recall of prior knowledge or learning. G.4 Create goal-centered online content, presenting it in a meaningful way. G.5 Online learners need support and specific coaching to develop favorable online learning behaviors. G.6 Activate learner processing to help them internalize new skills and knowledge. G.7 Give learners timely and constructive feedback. G.8 Performance should be based on previously stated objectives and assessed early and often. G.9 Enhance retention and transfer of knowledge by tying it to real-world situations and applications.

C. Quality control

Based on the quality process used at our university for online courses, a model was defined in terms of two types of control:

- **Coherence.** It is compulsory to match the structural and functional coherence of a given course with a set of characteristics that could be used to evaluate the initial design of the course, starting from the objectives defined by the teaching team [20].
- **Flexibility.** eLearning systems enable the establishment of flexible certification model, such as the freemium model, that demonstrates through a standard test-like evaluation, that the course achieved its objectives, and the learners achieved the learning goals.

The control of the assessment involves the use of a flexible certification model, which allows learners to demonstrate their achievements by taking a standardized test-like evaluation and uploading tasks (empathy map, design of accessible activity).

The course certificate of completion is provided as a form of recognition for learners who have completed the activities and tasks and demonstrated their commitment to professional development. Learners must complete all course activities and assessments to obtain the certificate.

D. Content syllabus

Creating content and activities for an online course does not necessarily require the acquisition of new skills, unlike other fields, but expertise in the development of online courses is highly desirable [21]. In this project, partners with humanistic expertise are guided and supported by the partner with long experience in educational technology to design the course structure and design and develop the educational resources. The guidelines followed include:

- The division of the course syllabus into N modules (each with an overall learner workload of 1-2 ECTS).
- The use of English language as the conducting language through the course content and interaction.
- Multilingualism is achieved in educational resources by video subtitling.
- The inclusion of a short introductory video in each module.
- The use of a self-paced methodology.
- The establishment of interactive user forums to help the learners and tutors develop an international community.
- The presence of automated feedback through objectives and online assessments, e.g. quizzes and exams.
- A final task that implies personal internal reflection and a wrap-up activity to gather all the knowledge achieved on a practical basis.

The course structure is divided into five units (see Table I), depending on duration and specific objectives. Each module has typically between 4 to 8 videos with associated activities and evaluations.

All units have practical activities, accumulating a learner workload of 25 hours (1 ECTS). Learners develop peer-to-peer and tutor-learner interaction through dedicated forums, addressing questions and sharing ideas with the course team.

E. Open Educational Resources Development

It seems impossible to teach using all learning styles, however it becomes apparent that a mix of multimedia resources is more effective; it satisfies the many types of learning preferences that one learner may embody as refuted by [22]. Many audiovisuals have been prepared in English, the conducting language of the project. Videos with an approximate duration of 5 minutes are linked to a YouTube channel offering direct translation and subtitling for all the languages of the project: Catalan, Greek, Icelandic, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

In addition to this, some interactive H5P resources have been included to motivate learners' interaction and engagement in the Inclusive Memory Pilot Course. There is an easy-to-use plugin to add these components to the Moodle platform. Specifically for this project, we have selected the following types:

- **Image 360°:** spread out on a large table, the resource show 6 different artefacts built specifically for visually impaired people as part of the MUSACCES project [23]: 3D reproductions, paintings in Braille, relief reproductions based in fuser technology and puzzles. For each artefact, a stop point is created with a brief explanation. Image was created with an Insta360 One X2-5.7K camera.
- **Drag and drop:** several images are distributed so that the users must match with each corresponding drop zones (specific technologies).
- **Image hot spots:** one resource has been created regarding the use of Virtual Reality means, each hotspot reveals texts, images or videos when clicked.

Consideration needs have been made to make the combination of videos and other materials facilitate the learning objectives established for the course. The pilot course has been designed to challenge the learners who took part, and not as a series of lectures to be "passively consumed". The data generated in the assessments can be evaluated 'massively' automatically.

III. PILOT COURSE DELIVERY AND INITIAL RESULTS

The course while writing this paper is being run from February 5th and will end April 30th 2024. As commented the design is self-paced offering the possibility of blended ad-hoc experiences created by the project partners. One tutor for each of the partners oversaw each of the unit's forums and general forums about news and support. Both pre- and post-course surveys have been designed to gather learners' interests and feedback from the experience.

Currently, there are 590 enrolled learners of which 354 are active (participating in forums, delivering the practical activities, and participating in the assessment). Of those 200

answered the pre-course survey indicating a predominantly participation of female learners (87%) and between 20 and 30 years old (52%). Most of the professional backgrounds of the participants include either professionals or learners from art and humanistic studies, but some of them are museum and cultural managers, science communicators, journalists, nurses, archaeologists, designers, and psychologists.

In a multiple-answer response as indicated in Table II, learners consider the course will help them to apply inclusive approaches in museums (65%), improve their practice (59%) and to better evaluate their competences.

TABLE II. EXPECTATIONS FROM THE COURSE

Expectations	Responses
The course will support me in applying inclusive approaches in museums.	130 (65 %)
The course will help me improve my practice.	118 (59 %)
The course will help me better evaluate my competences.	89 (44.5 %)
The course will help encourage me to use innovative technologies in museums.	77 (38.5 %)
The course will help me motivate other practitioners.	40 (20 %)
I do not have any expectations.	6 (3 %)

TABLE III. EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

	SD	D	N	A	SA
I enjoyed participating	0	3 (7 %)	5 (11%)	27 (60%)	10 (22%)
Enjoyed working with other learners	1 (2 %)	3 (7 %)	26 (58%)	11 (24%)	4 (9 %)

Note: SD: Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree and SA: Strongly Agree

So far 43 learners have responded to the post-course survey showing as indicated in Table III that mostly enjoyed the experience but did not show the same emphasis on working with other learners, probably because of the self-paced design. When asked about the things that they liked the most from the course, learners were mostly happy about the practical implementations:

Often university courses lack in terms of application, this pilot course was interesting in that it was accessible in a short amount of time in terms of content but conducted in a way that was easily understandable and applicable.

But learners considering the vast amount of content covered wanted more exemplification on inclusive strategies and technologies, although extra information was provided in that sense as complementary readings:

While the course provided valuable insights into various inclusive strategies, there was relatively less emphasis on exploring and implementing digital tools and technologies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The IM project aims to promote the construction of a shared common social memory linking arts, health, and well-being. The ongoing pilot course is showing the potential of these types of online educational training offerings. The feedback will be useful to improve the educational resources, practical activities and assessments provided, to produce a MOOC available to the community besides professionals in the health sector and museums, university teachers and learners from art and humanistic studies. Following the objective that at the end of the experience learners should realize that an Inclusive Museum for Health and Wellbeing extends its benefits to all members of society.

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