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Education for Heritage, Outdoor Education Summary of Needs Analysis Report

Education for Heritage, Outdoor Education (ECHOE) is a European cooperation project that aims at exploring ways to combine education for/about heritage, especially related to historic and archaeological sites, with outdoor education, including ecology, heritage protection, sports, leisure and open air activities, and to relate these fields to various groups of adult learners. The project is addressing mainly cultural professionals, adult educators and other professionals dealing with adult learners, and it is developed and implemented by organizations from six European countries: Romania, Italy, Austria, Turkey, Belgium and Norway. The project started with a needs analysis, as the partners considered necessary to measure the knowledge and perception of future beneficiaries with regard to issues related to heritage education and outdoor education as a preliminary step to the development of a series of educational materials.

I. Scope and Methods of the Needs Analysis

The needs analysis aimed at providing a mapping of the local context concerning heritage education and outdoor education, and at creating a profile of the local beneficiaries. The research covered 3 main objectives: 1) evaluating the degree of knowledge, know-how and interest of the target groups on issues related to heritage and outdoor education; 2) identifying the difficulties faced by the target groups in developing educational programmes for heritage and outdoor education; 3) providing information on what type of support the beneficiaries need and in what form. Regarding the methodology, partners used a qualitative approach and organized focus groups with **professionals from cultural and educational organizations, representatives of public administration and also from private companies providing educational and recreational services.**

In Romania, the Centre for Professional Training in Culture (CPPC) organized two consultation sessions, in Bucharest (6 participants) and in Mehedinti County (23 participants), which provided insight on two very different situations: Bucharest participants declared to know more about heritage education than outdoor education, whereas Mehedinti participants said to be less familiar both with outdoor and heritage education. In Italy, Centro Universitario Europeo per I Beni Culturali (CUEBC) involved 21 participants from the Salerno province, Campania region, who proved to be proportionally distributed between those having advanced expertise and those having no knowledge at all. In Turkey, Menderes Educational Town Directorate involved in the research 14 participants from Izmir province, Aegean Region; half of these participants declared to be familiar with both outdoor and heritage education. In Norway, the

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research took the form of interviews conducted individually, in peers or in small groups. Moderno AS involved 18 participants from Oslo and Stavanger. In Belgium, Alden Biesen Landcommanderij worked with 11 participants, mainly tourist guides for Limburg, who stated that cultural programmes take place or have a strong outdoor component.

II. Results of the Analysis

Overall, according to the participants in the research, the profile of the adult learners who participate in heritage education programmes includes: tourist groups and individuals; families; teachers accompanying pupils; local administration representatives; retired people and housewives; students; elderly people (+55); people working only summer jobs and with a lot of free time. Not all groups are found in all regions/countries participating in the project, therefore organizations can use the list as a source of inspiration for defining new target groups. Regarding the profile of the adult learners who participate in outdoor educational programmes, it includes: tourists groups and other groups such as teambuilding groups, when outdoor activities are requested by companies; adults interested in architecture and nature; families; young people and students; teachers accompanying school groups; elderly people (+55); cyclists, walkers/hikers. However, in some places, participation of adults is limited to groups of tourists and the lack of locals' participation is deplored.

According to the participants in the consultations, there are various benefits for adults participating in heritage educational programmes, such as acquiring knowledge of traditions and habits, enhancing creativity, more social interaction and new pride in their heritage for locals. With respect to the benefits for adults participating in outdoor education programmes, they include: a deeper discovery of environment by experiencing elements which cannot be perceived during traditional visits; recreation; health improvement; socialization and communication.

During the consultations, cultural and educational professionals made some significant observations: heritage education is often combined with other educational activities; participants feel a strong need for social cohesion; there is a sort of "closed circle" of participation in cultural heritage education. With respect to outdoor education, participants highlighted its appreciation in the urban environment as providing non-formal learning. They noted that it can be used also as an instrument for promoting civil responsibility and environmental awareness.

One reason for conducting this research was to assess the degree of openness of the professionals from the target-groups toward the approach proposed by the ECHOE project, the blending of methods and subjects for the purpose of a better learning experience provided to the adult learners. The perception was generally positive and participants threw in several ideas: the recreational side of the experience is very attractive; the possibility to involve users that are normally reluctant to start a classic learning programme due to their age and individual education; programmes involving both adults and children represent a way of attracting adults to learn and of improving communication with children (Romania); the freedom to move gives the opportunity to observe the place and develops the curiosity of adults, brings enjoyment in the process and can also produce long lasting learning outcomes (Turkey).

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In terms of the needs of ECHOE project's beneficiaries, the answers of the participants in consultations addressed several areas. Conceptually, there is a need for a better definition of what heritage education means in relation to outdoor education, and for a clear perspective on what can be done in relation to the various forms of heritage. Regarding programme content and design, a more flexible approach is needed. According to the participants, one essential element of the ECHOE approach in terms of human resources is the need of a larger number of education facilitators trained to use outdoor and heritage education, with a focus on the development of the capacity to create and transmit emotion. In some cases, programmes involving culture and heritage are harder to "sell", so more promotion is necessary. Regarding financial support, for groups and individuals with limited access to education and culture, it is necessary to find additional financial resources to support their participation.

Also, a list of topics related to the subject was presented to the participants in order to measure their interest. The preservation of natural and cultural heritage, as well as knowledge about natural and build environment proved to be topics of interest for all participants. Communication and social integration appealed to participants from Romania, Italy and Turkey. Sustainable development received positive comments from the participants from Romania, Italy, Norway and Turkey.

During the discussions, other aspects relevant to the project came to light, such as cultural heritage being understood sometimes in a limited way, outdoor education is not a very common methodology, cultural heritage is perceived to be important but not very appealing to the public and, in some countries, it is not integrated with and supported by educational policies. Also, participants noted that heritage and outdoor education and their combination get easily associated with a tourist itinerary, thus risking to be seen only as tourist services.

III. Final Conclusions and Remarks

The research provides us with an overview of the various contexts of project implementation in the ECHOE countries. With a diverse picture, it helps us understand the different needs and expectations of cultural and education professionals from the countries involved. The analysis proves the necessity of an initiative such as the ECHOE project and indicates directions to follow, both for the educational methodology and for the activities aimed at raising awareness and promoting the approach.