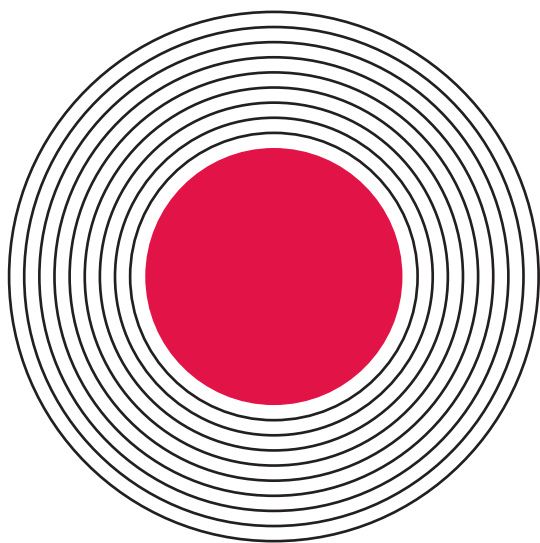
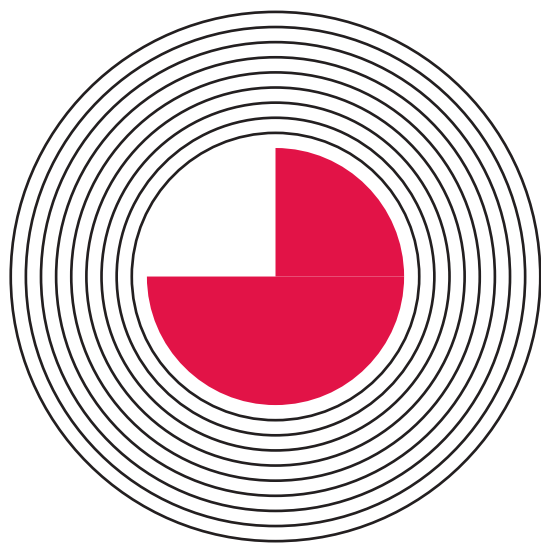
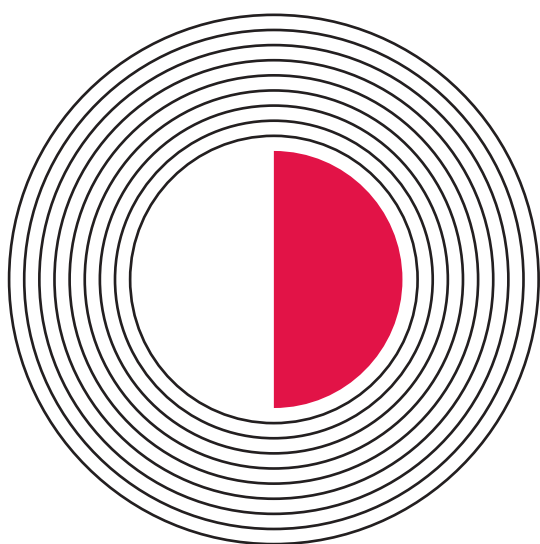
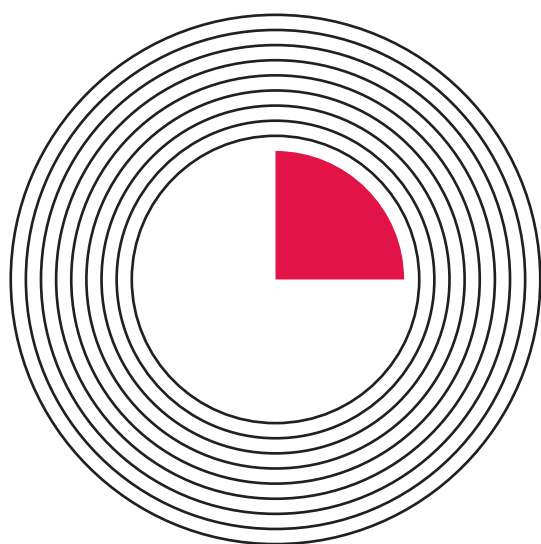


WELLBEING IN THE (CULTURAL) WORKPLACE



**A REPORT ON TRANS EUROPE HALLES
MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION
IN THE WELLBEING HOURS PROGRAMME**

TRANS EUROPE HALLES
Copyright: Trans Europe Halles

Authors of the publication: **Ella Overkleeft**

Editor: **Vicky Anning**

Design: **Darko Kujundžić**

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents. Neither the Commission or Trans Europe Halles can be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein, which reflects the views only of the authors.



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union

WELLBEING IN THE (CULTURAL) WORKPLACE

A REPORT ON TRANS EUROPE HALLES MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE WELLBEING HOURS PROGRAMME

Introduction	4
About Trans Europe Halles	5
Wellbeing Hours programme 2022	6
Anazitites Theatrou (Fix in Art)	8
Brunnenpassage	9
Communitism	11
Gabriel Caruana Foundation	13
Institute for X	16
Malakta	18
Nau Ivanow	20
Viernulvier / Vooruit	22
Closing remarks	23



teh.net

INTRODUCTION

The dictionary defines wellbeing as a “state of feeling healthy and happy”. Although it may be a utopian dream to feel happy all the time, it has never been more important for humans to strive towards a state of wellbeing. Figures from the **World Health Organization (WHO)** demonstrate the prevalence of mental health issues, with depression being one of the leading causes of disability, and suicide being the fourth leading cause of death among 15 to 29-year-olds. These statistics have led to increased recognition of the importance of mental health in achieving global development goals, as evidenced by the inclusion of mental health in the United Nations (UN) **Sustainable Development Goals**. In this historic step, the UN acknowledged the burden of disease of mental illness and defined mental health as a priority for global development.

To escape the pressures of everyday life, more and more people are turning to activities such as yoga, mindfulness and ice bathing in order to cultivate a sense of contentment. The workplace has also become a primary focus for mental health awareness. Companies like Spotify **are empowering their employees** to make every day into ‘World Mental Health Day’ by incorporating wellness and mental health programmes into their work environment. This is an important step towards improving

mental health and overall wellbeing on a global scale.

What if your organisation doesn't have a big budget to spend on wellbeing? Despite the lack of available financial resources, the independent cultural sector can still take steps to promote employee wellbeing. This can include offering flexible working hours, providing access to mental health resources and offering free yoga sessions or other forms of physical activity. Additionally, employers can try to create a supportive and nurturing environment to promote both physical and mental health. This could include staff development programmes, regular team-building activities as well as creating a culture of open communication and support. By taking these steps, the independent cultural sector can create a healthier and more supportive working environment that will help to keep its members motivated and engaged.

This publication provides information about the initiatives organised by cultural workers across Europe to encourage wellbeing in the workplace. The goal is to inspire cultural professionals who read this to follow their lead!

ABOUT TRANS EUROPE HALLES

As one of Europe's oldest and largest networks, Trans Europe Halles (TEH) has gained invaluable insight into the experiences of cultural workers in the workplace over the years. Through various programmes, TEH addresses these needs. From the outset, it has been clear that the position of independent cultural workers is precarious and workers in this sector require a great deal of peer support, which TEH strives to provide as a solidarity network.

Over the last five years, we have organised various activities designed to promote wellbeing among our members. One successful activity was **The Penguin Project** – *Enabling Cultural Workers to Build Sustainable Working Environments*, organised by TEH member Die Bäckerei and the TEH coordination office. This was followed up by the **Train the Trainer** programme, in which cultural workers were guided for a year to develop new strategies to help understand their motivations, context and ability to shape their working culture towards a more

equitable and rewarding relationship of mutual growth.

Another project TEH is involved in is the *Culture for Health* project, where we explore how our wellbeing is actually benefitting from experiencing and producing culture – by looking at the relationship between health, arts and culture. Culture For Health responds to the objective of the *Preparatory Action – Bottom-Up Policy Development for Culture & Well-being in the European Union* (EU). This action was designed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience and success stories in the EU related to the role of culture for wellbeing and health, to map the most relevant existing practices, to carry out work on the ground and to provide policy recommendations on the topic. Read more about the project [here](#).

WELLBEING HOURS PROGRAMME 2022

The latest project around the topic of wellbeing was initiated by Trans Europe Halles in 2022: the *Wellbeing Hours* programme. Through this programme, our members could apply for a lump sum to hire a coach or trainer who would facilitate sessions around a specific topic regarding mental health and wellbeing that was relevant to the centre and its community.

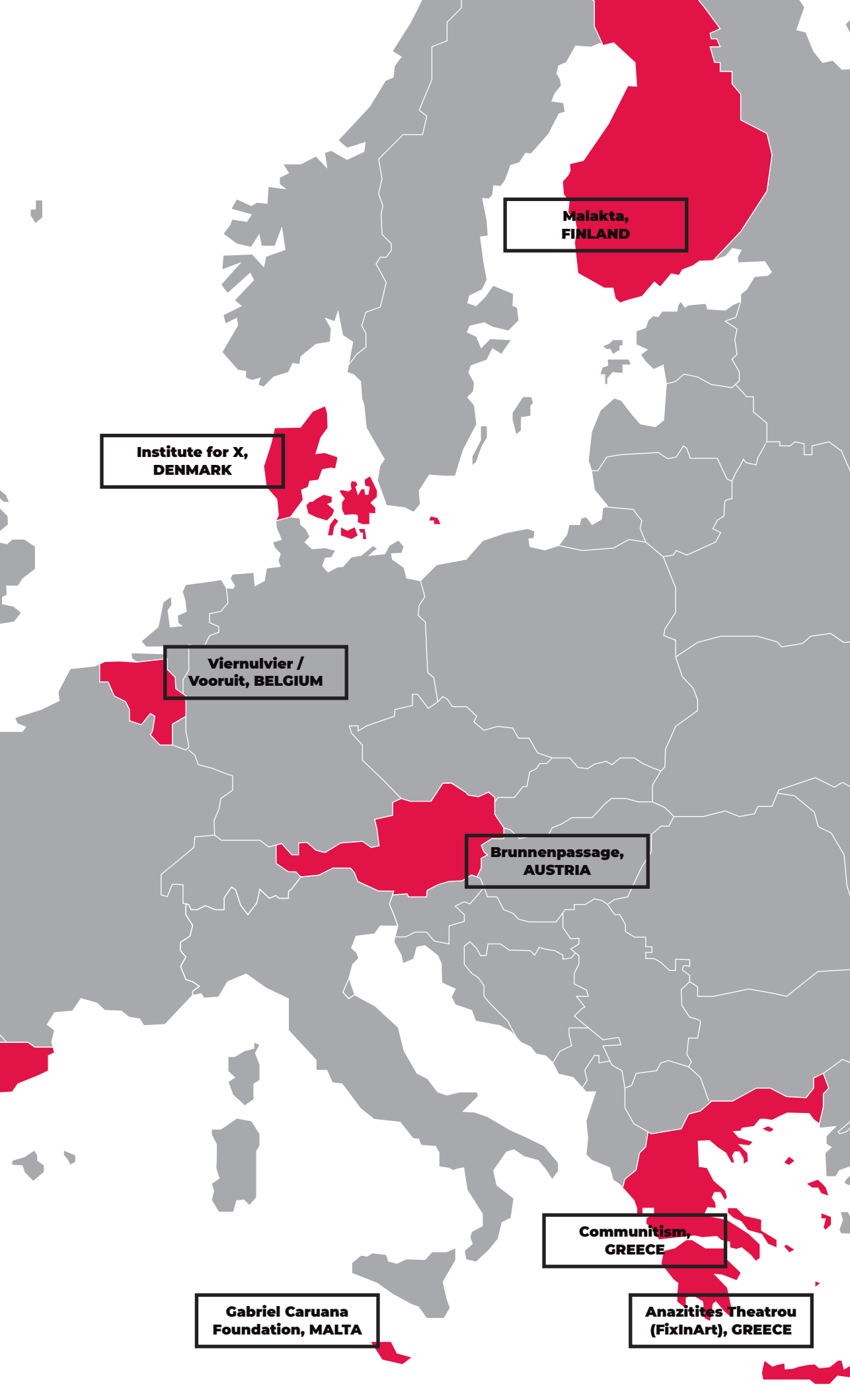
Eight members from seven different countries participated in the programme, each in their own unique way. There were no set criteria for the sessions, except that the needs of the centre's target group needed to be met through the chosen activity. This was achieved by providing members with the opportunity to learn, grow and develop skills related to their chosen topic. In addition, the programme provided members with the opportunity to build connections and relationships with other members and communities, while gaining a better understanding of the issues faced by the centre's target group.

Below you can read about the eight different activities and what they achieved.

PARTICIPANTS: Anazitites Theatrou - FixInArt (Greece), Brunnenpassage (Austria), Communitism (Greece), Gabriel Caruana Foundation (Malta), Institute for X (Denmark), Malakta (Finland), Nau Ivanow (Spain), Viernulvier / Vooruit (Belgium).
Total number of participants: 79



**Nau Ivanow,
SPAIN**



**Malakta,
FINLAND**

**Institute for X,
DENMARK**

**Viernulvier /
Vooruit, BELGIUM**

**Brunnenpassage,
AUSTRIA**

**Gabriel Caruana
Foundation, MALTA**

**Communism,
GREECE**

**Anazitites Theatrou
(FixInArt), GREECE**

EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE — OUR FESTIVALS ARE BACK FROM THE DEAD, HOW ABOUT US?

TRAINER

Evita Stavrou, a psychiatrist who has been observing and supporting the creative team of StreetMode Festival since 2019.

TARGET GROUP

Cultural managers, festival/event organisers, creative workshop facilitators, creative space organisers (gentrification has affected our city a lot over the past year, with a lot of initiatives losing their physical space or studios).

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

There have been studies during the pandemic that identified how consumption of culture is associated with greater happiness levels during crises. Moreover, spontaneous cultural practices (such as group singing) during times of uncertainty are associated with an increase in the propensity to help others.

These findings highlight culture as a tool for promoting mental health at the micro level and social capital resilience at the aggregate level. But how about the cultural providers, the cultural managers and the facilitators? How do we safeguard our mental health at a micro and social capital level?

Fix in Art will work via a series of meditative exercises of emotional intelligence on the topics of:

- Intention (why do we do what we do, where do our boundaries lie?)
- Self care (practice what you preach, how do we take care of ourselves and our teams)
- Coping mechanisms (taking time out during periods of stress).

Brunnenpassage, AUSTRIA

HEARTBEAT LESSONS

TRAINER

Myassa Kraitt (in collaboration with Ivana Pilic and Zuzana Ernst).

TARGET GROUP

The Brunnenpassage team, including extended staff – office management, curators, production, technicians and maintenance etc – and regular collaborators and artists.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

The worlds we navigate are often noisy and it's hard to listen carefully. Starting with our own heartbeat, this workshop was an invitation to listen from within and then engage with critical questions in our daily practice.

The session was customised for the team and extended to Brunnenpassage staff to come together and practise listening attentively to our own individual needs, pressures and privileges – oscillating between our own heartbeats and those of the group, in order to work on perception and the awareness of navigating exclusionary spaces with greater strength.

METHODS USED

The methods used in the workshop oscillate between self- and group reflections, as well as discussions about what could be done to improve listening to one's own needs and wellbeing.

The workshop gave insights into how navigating different working contexts and expectations are a challenging factor, especially for marginalised people. The methods and theory offered support the idea that listening to oneself improves the ability to listen to colleagues. The exercises supported the participants to specifically tune into their own needs at work, by not always confirming and being in line with the group's needs. Listening to one's own heartbeat in a group setting made the different rhythms inside each one of us audible to each other. This format uses simple body exercises and the amplified sound of the heartbeat as a baseline. It emphasises finding playful ways of translating large concepts into empirical and tangible experiences.

The world is noisy and we all hear a lot of different sounds all the time. This is exactly the case in the Brunnenpassage – from market stalls to high culture, you don't just want to hear, you want to make sure your message reaches everyone. The ideal is to be there for everyone at the same time, whether local or international. The goals of the team are ambitious and not always achievable.

Through *Heartbeat Lessons*, we want to create a space and open up opportunities that are deliberately not pursued. This programme offers a break and a pause so we can tune into ourselves better – listening to our heartbeats and telling rhyming stories that focus on caring.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

“With a converted stethoscope, we made our heartbeats more audible. Combined with deep listening and breathing exercises, poetry and reflection, we travelled a creative journey of self-care oscillating between our own desires as individuals and within a group.”

“The participants' feedback was that the experience of deep listening and making space was helpful for developing ideas about how exercises and self-care ideas could be transferred into the working environment.”

Communitism, GREECE

NON VIOLENT COMMUNICATION (NVC) TRAINING

TRAINER

Dimitra Gavriil, a certified Non Violent Communication trainer

TARGET GROUP

The Communitism ecosystem consists of the communitism core members, regular association members and honorary members, who can be regular users of the sociocultural centre, and external collaborators. Until now, only core members of the team have received this training, as a recurring event. The *Wellbeing Hours* session was used to open this opportunity up to the rest of the ecosystem, as the team believes that this gesture will elevate the quality of their common work.

The workshop was divided into two sessions to enable more people to join and to ensure availability.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

For the past two years, the Communitism community has been focusing on finding better ways of communicating. They have found that, once a good groundwork for communications has been laid, the community remains emotionally connected and withstands the challenges that daily demands bring. As a learning organisation, they have decided to develop and offer Non Violent Communication workshops regularly. They observed progress towards becoming the community they had always aspired to become. The *Wellbeing Hours* session helped to scale up this effect.

METHODS USED

Non Violent Communication (NVC) sessions are highly experiential. Building on the participants' experiences of working together, they used various methodologies such as circles, working in pairs, self-reflection, informative

exercises and NVC 'dance floors'. The goal was to connect with themselves, to acknowledge their feelings and deeper needs, to create a safe space where honest expression and empathic listening strengthens their collaboration.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

"The NVC process has been very beneficial for me. It opened new ways of perceiving myself and others – also learning new ways of expression, especially when I'm experiencing anger or other negative feelings. It is certainly a more effective way of communicating and I hope I will use it more in my life."

"What I got from these hours of NVC is very valuable for me at the moment, because I am struggling with many things [over] the last months, which makes me very emotional. It helped me find clarity and confidence to communicate what I have in my mind. Therefore, I feel more independent and sure about myself. I am very grateful for the NVC experience."

UNLEARNING WELLBEING

TRAINER

Julienne Schembri – Somatic Dance Practice

TARGET GROUP

The workshops specifically targeted individuals involved in the organisation, artists and creative practitioners who contribute to the artistic programming, and other interested people.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

We hear a lot about wellbeing, and it's starting to feel like another thing to achieve, adding to our never-ending list of tasks. How can we practise wellbeing and integrate practices in our daily lives? Is it possible to reprioritise our health? Working with three coaches/artists, we will be unravelling wellbeing and identifying how we can integrate certain practices to ground ourselves, integrate playfulness in our lives, and consciously adapt to external situations.

As a creative community of artists, there are seldom opportunities to gather together in community to engage in practices of self care. These days are often the first to be forgotten as local artists tend to wear many hats in order to survive as professionals in Malta.

The artists expressed the need to slow down, to be held in an environment that didn't require them to produce anything, to reconnect with their sensorial selves, to gather in a creative community with other artists to play, discuss and relax. We retreated to the beautiful grounds of Villa Psaignon, in the calm and peaceful atmosphere of Dingli in the rural northwestern part of Malta. The intention was to invite experiences that encouraged recollection, connection and creative practice with the tools of somatic movement, mindful walking and reminiscence.

The group was invited to bring an object that linked them to the heritage of their past as artists: What was the first painting you remember being moved by? Who was the first artist that inspired you? Do you remember what moved you? This object was an entry point into the artist's history, as a powerful totem of

remembrance of the early moments we connected with joy and freedom to our art practice. The session then invited the artists to step into the present moments through sensing, feeling and moving. We welcomed the artists to a space that made room for ritual and intention to emerge.

CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING

Unlearning Wellbeing created a space for the artist collective to share with each other, to reflect on their individual practices, and to offer experiences that each artist could take away into their daily lives as micro practices that are always available to draw on. The day retreat also created space for exchanges between the collective to take place, to create a sense of community amongst each person attending. The day began with a Somatic Movement experience where we invited a slower pace and awareness to the process of shifting weight from foot to foot.

Each participant was invited to think about their own boundaries by awakening the skin through a sensory experience, inviting them to release the joints of their body into a softer, more released space. The somatic process prioritises rest and the morning's activity was full of resting interludes to truly welcome the idea of slowing down and awakening the senses of sight, touch, smell and hearing. The group was guided to explore personal memories of safe spaces and their meanings to each person, allowing this to become a metaphor for the day. Safety became a vehicle for each person to open up about their personal joys, struggles and doubts that they deal with as practising artists in Malta.

The day was curated to create moments for personal observation and reflection in tandem with created moments for small collective groups to form through group work. This was done to help create a sense of community amongst the artists and professionals working on the Spring Artistic Programme for Emerging Artists 2022-2024 by the Gabriel Caruana Foundation.

The day was curated from top to tail, and we organised a light colourful vegan lunch in the afternoon as well as sipping herbal teas throughout the day.

METHODS USED

Somatic movement practices: brought participants into connection with themselves, the group, space and the environment and the natural life around them through sensing, feeling, imagining and movement.

One hour of mindful walking: The participants were invited to get into groups of three and walk in the rural areas surrounding Villa Psaiagon. They were invited to walk mindfully, noticing smells, texture, sounds and sights during the walk. The participants were also asked to take the role of the leader in turns, to lead the walk and for the others to follow. This walk was curated to take on the form

of a ritual; participants were invited to walk in silence and retain a connection through touch to each other.

Therapeutic Holding through the facilitation of Gestalt Therapists where personal objects were used as a stepping stone into each artist's history. Each participant shared the meaning of their objects with the group, marking and creating paper as a closing ritual. We ended the day by marking the floor that was carpeted in paper and we prepared a colourful vegan lunch, each dish having different hues, smells, tastes and textures.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

"The experience was a necessary pause to connect back to our human selves. It allowed me time to be and exist in a soothing environment with other creatives. I enjoyed the deep conversations we had as a collective. I walked away feeling lighter and less alone."

"I really enjoyed the workshop, mostly for providing the space and time to come together and enjoy a tranquil day with fellow artists which unfortunately doesn't happen often. It is in such an environment that good relationships can be cultivated from which understanding, constructive critique and collaboration can emerge."

RECONNECTED X

TRAINER

Liene Jurgelane – she is part of the X community, an experienced facilitator and holder of spaces, especially when it comes to topics of emotional and mental wellbeing. She mentors people in X in a holistic way, is trusted by the team and can meet us where we are, to help us open up with one another.

TARGET GROUP

For the core team of Institut for X and members of the board.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

It was a one-day workshop that offered an opportunity for the X core team and board to come together, re-connect with one another both as colleagues, and also as humans; a chance to share individual dreams, fears and opportunities, and explore ways to support one another better work-wise, emotionally and spiritually.

Institut for X wanted to hold a workshop like this since the start of last summer, but there have been changes in the team, in the board, big projects ending, new ones starting, etc. As a result, they haven't had the chance to slow down and check in with one another on a deeper level and find out how they are moving with the changes, with what is happening in the world, and how they can support one another better.

NEEDS ADDRESSED

Biggest needs: The board and office of Institut for X had not spent any informal time together in several years. That was a primary goal of organising this workshop, as well as the need to have a facilitated space to look back at the work done so far, and to look ahead at the new year to come in a creative rather than 'management meeting' way.

With this as a basis, a workshop/participatory artistic experience/journey for the office and board of X was loosely based on the heroine's and hero's journey idea. Participants moved from place to place over five hours with different tasks in different places:

- At “home” they were individually and collectively reflecting on the past year – joys, sadnesses, changes, achievements etc.
- In “Dreamspace” they explored wishes and ways to support one another in 2023.
- In the “Pit”, they shared fears and insecurities.
- “In the tree of life” – they shared what they appreciated about one another.
- In between there were walks, explorations, crafting, sculptures etc.

METHODS USED

The session was designed to attend to emotional (through deep connection), spiritual (through activating mythological thinking) and physical (walking outdoors) wellbeing. All senses were engaged. Storytelling was used as the basis of the session. There were different tasks and rituals throughout the session.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

“I have laughed. I have cried. I have felt like being in a fairy tale with my good companions. It was lovely to share a different kind of activity with colleagues and board members.”

“The journey we went through created a real bond between us all. I appreciate most the moment where we shared our dreams, but the real magic happened when we shared about the insecurities that we are all facing, but never have a space to connect us in that. The framework of the journey, the gamification and mysterious story telling made the whole experience very bonding, honest and joyful. Thank you for doing this for us. You are a special treasure for this place.”

Malakta, FINLAND

YOGA NIDRA

TRAINER

Magdalena Lindroos Yoga teacher

TARGET GROUP

Open for all.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

Yoga nidra is a form of deep relaxation that is guided through an audio guide. The yoga nidra itself can be done preferably lying down or sitting in a comfortable armchair.

Yoga nidra is a very relaxing form of yoga and can be described as 'yogic sleep'. The sessions begins by moving the body through gentle, relaxing yoga exercises and then participants unwind further with a beneficial session of yoga nidra, practised lying comfortably on their back or in a comfortable armchair.

Yoga nidra is like a guided meditation that builds a feeling of calmness within us, reducing stress levels in the body. Half an hour of yoga nidra is apparently equivalent to several hours of sleep and recovery. Led by an audio guide, the session offers both emotional and physical recovery in a combination of movement and meditation.

NEEDS ADDRESSED

Yoga nidra addresses the need to relax and let go of everyday tasks and stresses, but also to get to know oneself on a deeper level. The sessions provide a safe, quiet and relaxed space to let go of these things and create an opportunity to delve into oneself for better self-knowledge and healing. Through the guided sessions, the participant could let go of all "performance", especially for others' eyes, and just relax into the meditation.

CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING

The sessions provided an introduction to yoga nidra and a moment of deep relaxation that some of the participants had never experienced before. At one of the open sessions, a group from a nearby home for recovering addicts attended. It was very nice to see how they relaxed deeply. They thanked the team for the session afterwards. From another session, there was feedback that it had been so deeply relaxing that the person just wanted to continue. A few people also suggested this should be a regular monthly session and/or people should take turns in sharing wellbeing practices.

METHODS USED

“Yoga not only changes the way we see things, it transforms the person who sees them”, BKS Iyengar. “Yoga promotes health and wellbeing and, if practised regularly, strengthens creative expressions; as a guide, I try to find a balance between asana, emotion, body, mind and soul relations, as a pretext leading to expanded consciousness, creativity, intuition and enjoyment, as well as to release tensions and emotions.” – Marha Echavarria

Nau Ivanow, SPAIN

TEAM AND ARTISTS WORKOUT – YOGA AND MEDITATION

TRAINER

Marha Echavarria, dancer and yoga trainer.

TARGET GROUP

The managing team at Nau Ivanow, the resident companies linked to the centre and other professionals working in the centre.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

The plan was to share yoga practices and meditation techniques between the managing team at Nau Ivanow and the resident artists, one or two days per week, helping the people involved to continue their practices in a long-term vision.

NEEDS ADDRESSED

The users of Nau Ivanow who move around the offices, the co-working spaces and the rehearsal rooms had long wanted a space where they could disconnect from their daily lives, from their screens and from the frenetic pace of work. So the opportunity to take part in yoga classes has been perfect to find this space. It is also ideal to be able to do this in the same workspace, not only for the work sphere but also to connect with the people who live there.

Between artists, cultural managers and producers of stage companies, they have created a space where they can share from a more relaxed and calm point of view. In general, it has contributed to their wellbeing and to weaving connections in more relaxed spaces.

CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING

“Attending yoga sessions has been an enjoyable experience as it provides a space to focus on oneself and combine physical and mental activity. Doing yoga once a week in the workplace has been beneficial in releasing stress, refreshing energy, and creating a sense of community and group wellbeing. This has had a positive effect on overall wellbeing.” Marha Echavarria

METHODS USED

“Yoga not only changes the way we see things, it transforms the person who sees them”, BKS Iyengar. “Yoga promotes health and wellbeing and, if practised regularly, strengthens creative expressions; as a guide, I try to find a balance between asana, emotion, body, mind and soul relations, as a pretext leading to expanded consciousness, creativity, intuition and enjoyment, as well as to release tensions and emotions.” – Marha Echavarria

Viernulvier, BELGIUM

EIGHT YOGA SESSIONS FOR STAFF AND ARTISTS.

TRAINER

Laura Vanborm, professional yoga coach

TARGET GROUP

The workshops were intended for the entire staff (from cleaning staff to bar staff and managers) as well as artists in residence who were just there for the day.

WHY WAS IT NEEDED?

Through the yoga workshops, the team wanted to start the day on a different note. On the one hand, they wanted to strengthen the mental energy of the individual, but on the other hand they were also looking for connections. As artists and staff often work in isolation from each other, and do not take time to get to know each other, they felt it would offer substantive satisfaction to feel connected.

NEEDS ADDRESSED

A lot of people sit behind a desk all day, so the focus was on opening the shoulders and the upper back in yoga classes.

CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING

After the class, people felt more open, more stretched and connected with their bodies. They left their head for an hour and made a connection within themselves. They took a step back for one hour and were not rushing, which was very important me-time.

METHODS USED

“In the yoga classes, props were used to help the students go deeper into the postures. People have to help each other, watch each other and correct postures, so they also learn how to watch another body and how a spine is moving.” – Laura Vanborm

CLOSING REMARKS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who participated in the programme for their openness, creativity and enthusiasm. We hope that the activities planned will be an example to other members of the Trans Europe Halles (TEH) network, as we are confident that integrating wellbeing practices into our workplaces would benefit the team and wider community.

The TEH network exists to facilitate the exchange of not only best practices, but also the challenges and vulnerabilities that exist within our communities. We believe that “there's no vision without an open heart” should be our mantra in order to cultivate an environment of connection, softness and empathy to enrich the culture of our workplaces and, ultimately, society as a whole.

If you would like to learn more about the centres or sessions they have organised, please contact:

Thalia Giovannelli
[**thalia@teh.net**](mailto:thalia@teh.net)

Find Trans Europe Halles at
[**www.teh.net**](http://www.teh.net)



TRANS
EUROPE
HALLES

teh.net