



**Theatre -the best promotion to learn for**

**Active  
citizenship  
of  
young  
people**

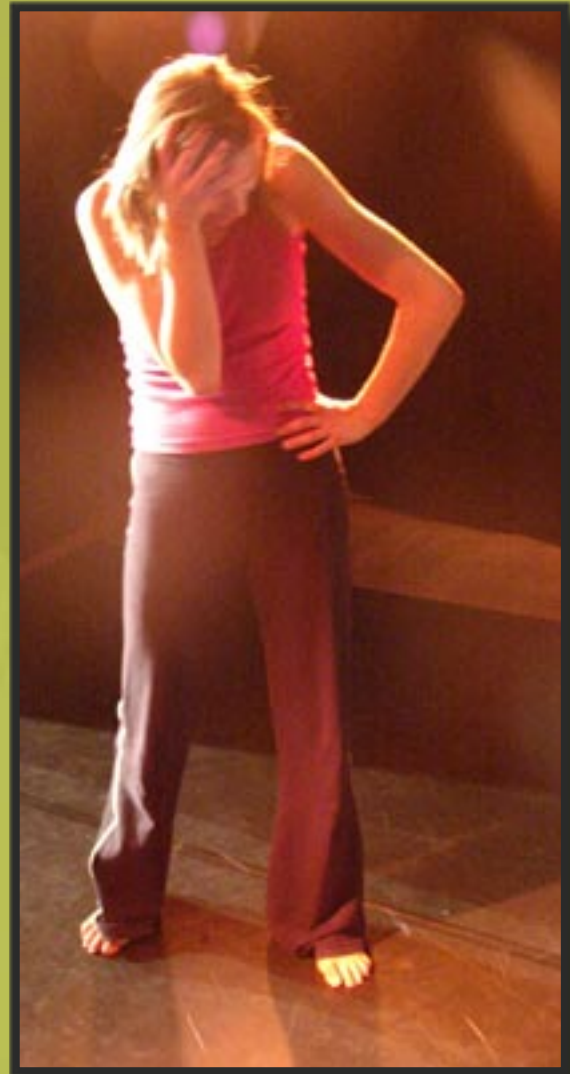
**A joint action project**



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from the participant organisation.

# **Joint Action Theatre – the best promotion to learn for active citizenship of young people.**



Is a transnational project with partners in:

Germany, Berlin: Schlesische 27 Jugend Kunst International”,  
Greece (Kryoneri): ”Filoxenia”,  
Italy (Vasto): ”Archi – Nuova Associazione”,  
Lithuania, Vilnius Babilonas,  
Sweden, Gävle: Lättings.

The project took place during 031001-050630 with support from the European commission.

The reports and pictures in this publication are the outcome of the activities of each national project during their work with the Forum theatre. We decided early to report our activities focusing on these themes:

- Commencing the project (how we started on the local level)
- The introduction of Forum theatre to the group.
- Themes we worked with within the group process (in training, activities and the origin of the themes).
- Testimonies of the Participants
- Presentations (what, how and the reactions from actors and audience).
- Network building.

# The objectives of the project.

The purpose of the project is:

- To create a model of how to increase the young people's active citizenship in a modern society on a local level.
- To use forum theatre (theatre of the oppressed) as a tool for making the youth become active citizens.
- To train the youth to inform other youth about different topics.
- To create a network and build up local partnership between the youth and local authorities.
- To make the youth experts in finding an important role in the society.

At the end of the project we will have a report from an external researcher, a report from an external evaluator and a publication made by the partners as well as a video documentation. All these material will be publicised locally and internationally by all partners.

## Seminars

During the project all partners have met in four seminars. Each seminar has had specific themes.

On the first seminar we all clarified the objectives of the project, decided the dates of the seminars and agreed on how we should report our work to each other during the time of the project. Our external researcher and evaluator presented their part of the project. We also started to work with forum theatre. Some of the participants had never used forum theatre so we did a lot of games and exercises and experienced forum theatre for ourselves. After the seminar each organisation went back and introduced forum theatre in groups on a local level.

On the second seminar we focused more on the joker's part in forum theatre and what to think of when preparing and presenting forum theatre for an audience. We ourselves prepared and performed forum scenes in the group. When we arrived at the third seminar our researcher had made visits to each partner and had experienced forum theatre with different partners. During the first day of the seminar we got to see videos and photos from the performances. We learned about the experiences made and the questions rose. The theme for this seminar was "youth giving information to other youth". Lättings performed a forum theatre that fitted in to this theme. A forum theatre performed for teenagers in the ages between 16 - 19 about drinking and driving. Then we had workshops on how we prepare the youngsters for being informateurs for other youth.

At our last seminar we would make a strategy for disseminating our work and experiences. One theme we looked at on all seminars was networking, how to create and build local and regional partnerships.

# **Description of forum theatre**

Forum theatre or theatre of the oppressed was created by Augusto Boal, (1931- ) Brazil during 1960 and 1970. Boal have been a director, pedagogue, author, dramaturge and writer and the artistic leader for the Arena theatre in Sao Paulo. Augusto Boal has been and still is travelling around the world and holds workshops and teaching out the method of forum theatre.

Forum theatre is a way of practising for the reality and to make a change of being a passive spectator to take the lead of your own life.

In forum theatre you have a situation where some kind of oppression takes place and the scene is ending badly for the oppressed person. When the scene is presented for an audience you play the scene again but this time you will put a powerful tool in to the hands of the audience. They can this time stop the scene and try new strategies for the oppressed person to end or change the oppression. The audience get the opportunity to come up and replace the oppressed and play their suggestion or strategy for them self. There is not one right solution to a problem; there can be as many solutions as there are people participating to one problem.

It's important to point out that a situation can always change but not always a person.

# ARCI VASTO LOCAL ACTIVITY OF THEATRE FORUM

Our local plan on the theatre forum started after producing a poster, designed by one of our German European volunteer Katharine. The poster represented an empty chair with a little man inviting someone to sit on the chair with a phrase from Augusto Boal visibly seen: "everybody can play theatre also the actors". The poster was exhibited in public places, schools, libraries, youth information centres, pubs, bars, etc. All those interested in participating in the forum theatre activities in ARCI's centre were invited. This was the official start of the project. In 21/03/2004, during the first session, approximately 15 persons took part. A lot diversified between the ages, experiences and interests.



We began the first meeting with exercises and acting games without speaking. On that first evening the group created a basic performance. Forum theatre and its history was introduced and presented to the group in the second meeting. The objectives and principles were given out on a paper to all participants. A video documentation of a forum theatre performance that ARCI Vasto had created about five years ago was presented in the third meeting. From that moment until today we have been very active realising scenes according to the participants desire.

In May 2004 we invited the association Jolly from Laverne, they are experts forum theatre producers from Italy, to have a three-day open stage activities. They inspired us to create an example of a forum theatre that we decided to use in the future.

This year during our working process with forum theatre the following topics have emerged: exclusion, sexual harassment, youth creativity, family, school, jobs, antennas for mobile phones, television, mobbing and prejudice. All these topics





have been developed during our thirty encounters once a week from March 2004 until March 2005.

The group have been very open during this year. About seventy people have participated on various levels based on their studies, professions and family matters. During the encounters all those who participated were very active. At least twenty people have participated on a more regular level and about ten people have been constant from the beginning. The age of the group has varied between 18 – 60 years old, but the majority have been between 18 – 30 years old. The diversity of ages has been constructive to the group. It has allowed different generations to exchange, reflect and discuss their problems as spectators. We realised that the problems do not vary between generations but they are shared.

The experiences of the participants also vary a lot. Some have a passion for theatre and some no experience at all. There are teachers, students, and operators of associations. The variation of experiences has also enriched the relationship between the group members. The participants are still in contact, they think they understand the usefulness of forum theatre to participate. We believe that many, perhaps subconsciously, are using forum theatre during their daily work.

The reaction of the public during our two performances was very active. They suggested very interesting solutions and did not hesitate to replace the oppressed with themselves.

About “networking”, we proposed forum theatre to the local administration to see if they were interested to introduce it to their activities with the young people. So far we have heard nothing from them. They consider it to be to innovative.

We proposed the theatre forum to a number of (art colleges) high school in Vast. Some of them are interested. 17 march we will start

# Report from Youth centre Babilonas, Lithuania

## Beginning

“Right now we feel and know what has changed in us since we have started to walk through the path of Forum Theatre with our friends from Sweden, Greece, Italy and Germany”.

But let's not start from the end.

In this report we want to overlook and present to you the most interesting and important challenges/aspects of our work through Forum Theatre. We will try not only to “open” the theme, but also to transfer the feelings that we had and still have...

It started when Jurga Gailiute and Rolanda Sliaziene came back from Sweden (they were the first ones who participated in the first training seminar on Forum Theatre in Gavle). Enormous excitement and enthusiasm was shouting from them and they shared it with us. It was the first time when most of us heard about Forum Theatre and the need to “try it on” was obvious.

Right now we have prepared, showed and evaluated three performances for the audience. All the topics of the performances were related to the issues that were interesting and important to the group members.

## Process...

We – the group of school students attending Youth centre Babilonas. Youth centre “Babilonas” – non-profit NGO – one of the most popular places for non-formal education of young people in Vilnius. All

one stage of forum theatre with 25 teen-agers at school and meet the group 9 times in a total of 18 hours. It will be a very interesting experience for us to prove how FT can work with teenagers in the town. We have to make a good network with the participants of the open group who often came from various experiences different from ARCI that has allowed us to get to know each other. With the young participants of the open group in the last month we started to work on the theme drinking and driving, we are trying to work out a performance of FT on that theme to introduce it to the school next year.

In conclusion we must say that we are happy with the result of what we experienced. We consider it to be stimulating to the feeling of the active participation. We are aware that active participation is the fruit of a personal process made of many members. The forum theatre can be an optimal START UP, also a single encounter can open your mind towards horizons never explored before. In the future we need more to continue with this open- group to half between the recreational one, the own conscience and why not in the constant politicisation. Our dreams are those of being able to use the forum theatre in prisons, in schools between the adolescents and in the communities of the drug addicts. All these realities have been approached, and we hope that these approaches are transformed soon into activities.





our activities are based on communication and active participation, self-expression and personal initiative: youngsters may experiment and realise their ideas using different forms of arts and their own creativity. Our main program is weak on arts for school classes – this is the best way for the youngsters to know our centre and be active in it (over 6500 young people have taken part in our activities). At the beginning the idea of Forum Theatre project was just presented to the participants of our daily programs, to volunteers of the youth centre and others – so, we gathered the group of 15 persons. As the “tool” is called Forum theatre, the beginning was related to giving the basics of theatrical skills to the participants. We played, improvised, acted and played again. Step by step we were approaching to the Forum.

Here I need to mention that Jurga, due to personal reasons had to give away all the work in “Babilonas” (we still miss her). Leading of the Forum Theatre group too. We had to take a quick decision, concerning the leader and continue to work. This is where I showed up. I am Donatas Petkauskas and nice to meet you. I’ve been acquainted with Forum Theatre a bit, so together with Rolanda we continued until the first performance was born. Our new “child” was presented to the audience before the second meeting in Sweden. It was something...really powerful, emotionally deep and... deep in all senses. This something also raised a lot of questions, to which we tried to find answers in the second meeting in Sweden.

During the first stage of work our intention was to create something real, from the lives/experiences of the group members.



The stories told by the youngsters were scary – a drunken father is beating his wife and son. The son is withdrawn; the mother is tired of everything (real experience from group members). The process of preparing and performing was a touching experience for all of us. Sometimes it was hard to deal with all the feelings that were raised during our work. We questioned ourselves how deep we can search inside an individual. How to transfer real experiences into the stage without unnecessary distress? Maybe everything should be more “surface” orientated? During the second meeting in Sweden they put us into the place of the participants. Then all the answers came to our minds subconsciously. We were lucky that we were trained on different techniques. We knew how to start with forum theatre and how to get the people out of it gradually. From that point our work became easier. When I say easy, I do not mean to say that we did less, what I mean is we have been more competent in what we were doing.

My role in the whole process consisted of leading the group to how to develop an idea into a performance (joker) and evaluating all the happenings.

Being a joker, for me, was a huge learning process. Jokers only ask, they do not express their opinions. They involve the audience, STOP/START the scenes, copes with the stress of actors, audience and his own. After the performance one crucial question was where is the balance between acting and discussing? By discussing it among each other and by clarifying it in Sweden we found out, that every one of us can say what you should do! Ok, then get on the stage and try to do it yourself!!! See how it feels to be oppressed in the school, at home or in the street!!!

It takes time to “get into the Body” of a joker, to see what a joker can do or not. It is just like driving – at first you learn the rules and think of them when you are on the road. Afterwards you just drive.

The recommendation for those who will start with forum theatre – be sure that you have a professional preparation, it is a very powerful tool. And if you don’t know how to use tools then you can hurt someone.

Now we see that those youngsters who participated in forum theatre are initiating new projects together, they want to be together and to do something useful not only for themselves, but also for other people. That is to say we have reached the result. What happens to the people is the most important...



“Right now we feel and know what has changed inside us since we have started to walk through the path of Forum Theatre with our friends from Sweden, Greece, Italy and Germany...”

# FILOXENIA

## -Youth support organization

### DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION

FILOXENIA - Youth support organization, is a non-profit NGO founded in 1995. The objectives of FILOXENIA are to support the youth and the rural development in the county of Korinthia by developing youth projects, cultural projects, eco-tourism projects and environmental projects. FILOXENIA runs a youth information centre in the village of Kryoneri, an environmental education centre in the lake Stymphalia and co-ordinates the activities of the Municipal Youth Information Centre of Kiato and the Prefectural Youth Centre of Korinthia.

FILOXENIA carries out European Voluntary Service long term and short term projects from the very beginning of the EVS programme (1997), youth exchanges and work camps, training seminars for youth workers, workshops for school classes and multimedia projects. Since 2003, FILOXENIA participates in the Leonardo da Vinci programme as a sending and hosting organization.

FILOXENIA is member of:

Youth County Council of Korinthia  
Five Stars local Network (Youth Information Centres network of Korinthia);  
PREMJER European Youth Councils Network (through the Youth County Council of Korinthia);

EVS Pilot Network 'Creative Cooperation's'  
LABORATORIUM 'Network for Employment in the Third Sector'

FILOXENIA is a partner in the running Joint Action Forum Theatre youth project, co-ordinated by Kulturhus Lätting (SE)



### HOW WE STARTED

Initiating the project a team has been formed consisting of Konstantinos Tsetsonis (a professional actor and director to lead the Forum Theatre Workshops), Emmanuel Mappus (a youth worker with theatre experience to assist the leader in the workshops and to co-ordinate the networking activities) and Nikos Pulos (on behalf of FILOXENIA to have the overall project management). The Prefecture Youth Centre of Korinthia in the town of Corinth was the chosen place for the offered workshops. A media release went out to the local newspapers and around the town advertising forum theatre workshops as "theatre for everybody".

Six people participated in the first meeting. As the weeks went by the numbers increased to, at times, twenty-five, turning to a core group of twelve at the end of the workshops. They came mostly from Corinth and the ages were from sixteen to forty five, men and women.

Throughout 2004 and during the first few months of 2005 the group met twice a week in the evenings.

## **INTRODUCTION OF FT AS A METHOD TO THE GROUP**

In the beginning the group focused on exercises that brought awareness of the body and its physical mechanism, its conditioning and its capability for restructuring and relearning. Games were used to make the body expressive so to receive and emit messages and to develop an extrovert approach to the work ahead. Image techniques were introduced half way through the work and the models and its dynamisations heralded the examination of oppression from the multiple views of the participants. Lastly improvisation techniques and exercises for the preparation of a forum theatre model helped the group to develop the themes that appeared through the work.



## **THEMES IN TRAINING, ACTIVITIES AND THEIR ORIGIN**

The participants initiated the themes that developed from the training and became the models for the performances. They dealt with the abuse of women, children, discrimination against immigrants, abuse of power by the authorities and in the workplace.

## **PARTICIPANTS TESTIMONIES**

*FT taught me to observe and feel my body so to reach my emotions.*

*I experienced this by way of playing the abuser and sometimes the abused so to arrive in the examination of everyday life where everything occurs and I should play both the spectator and the protagonist. FT is collective and the spectators go through a journey of feelings. For me it was an awakening*

Giorgia- Preschool teacher

*What made the biggest impression on me was the examination of oppression in my life and my responsibility in this. The games and exercises had a relaxing effect on me. They created a child like atmosphere that I always miss in my adult life. I would like to continue working with FT so that I could broaden my knowledge with this kind of theatre.*

Kostas- Musician

*My experience was amazing and special. It changed the way I looked at things and made me enter circumstances unthinkable previously. FT should be introduced more effectively in Greece. Thanks for shaking me*

Stefanos-Shopkeeper

*It was my first theatrical experience and I realised that the observation of the body leads to personal –humane development. I like it because it is not traditional. It gave me freedom in expression. The results were unexpected. It is social theatre. Now I know more and I know nothing. It is an open-end experience*

Agelos-Soldier

## PRESENTATION AND REACTIONS

FT was performed three nights in November 2004 at the youth centre of Corinth. In the first night the discrimination against the immigrants was performed and partially assisted by the spectators. That helped to improve the script. The final two nights the word of mouth had spread in the town and many people came along with local theatre group comprising part of the audience. In all these three nights the participation of the “spectators” was intriguing and deeply moving. They raised issues, attempted changes and heated debates went on. That made those evenings extraordinary.



## NETWORK BUILDING

Arriving at the end of this pilot project in 2005 we have committed our participation in large scale training and information European funded project over the next years that deals with Forum Theatre and will expand our base of interest. We will be focusing on associations dealing with dependencies, immigrant groups and schools in the secondary education in Greece.





## Schlesische 27

Jugend Kunst Kultur  
International

### **Schlesische 27 /Diskoteater Metropolis**

Since more than 20 years ago the *Youth Art and Culture Centre Schlesische 27* explores and offers community oriented Art Projects in order to empower the participants and creative resources especially the children and youngsters (age 6 to 27), who are facing social exclusion and segregation.

In co-operation with professional artists of all different artistic fields the youngsters discover their strength and place in the world community. Art functions as a catalyst in many directions.

At present the theatre department of Schlesische 27 is strongly based on the activities of the Diskoteater Metropolis project. It is a group of Metropolis, which participates in the project "Joint Action – Forum theatre".

They meet regularly to practice and perform. It is an open group, which means that you can start in the group at any time and of course stop at any time you like. There is always a core of regular members who devote themselves to a project for at least one season (one year). They secure an important aspect of the philosophy of Diskoteater Metropolis: continuity.

The reason why Metropolis participates in forum theatre is to get another tool in production of a theatre performance. Forum theatre, according to Metropolis, involves the people, as an art form, in the themes it addresses to the youngster. It has a simple frame, no stage or big theatre mechanism is necessary, a situation for forum theatre can be created anywhere, and it can be played where the people are. It creates a public situation, a common communication and intervention.



During January 2004 we introduced forum theatre to a group of interested participants of Diskoteater Metropolis.

In that period we experimented a lot with different kinds of drama such as invisible theatre and installations. As always, some participants liked it and some did not. At the beginning, however, most of us started with reading and talking about forum theatre, while four of us began participating in a forum theatre workshop. In October, a scenario was worked out. It was strongly influenced by the story of a young man who did not want to go to school, *Summer Rain*, narrated by Margerite Duras.

The topic had strong connections to the experiences of some of the members of our group as well as to the present problems of the part of Berlin where we live today.

Moreover, we experimented by participating in two different forum theatre events. At this stage we were strongly convinced about how effective a forum theatre performance could be. The next step was to test our performance with friends before eventually looking for cooperation partners. In November we succeeded in performing our first forum theatre evening. We were elated by the responses of the young spectators.

#### Networking

Diskoteater Metropolis agreed upon clear sequences of meetings and rehearsals leading to a suitable approach to production of forum Theatre in Berlin. In the beginning we arranged to meet once every two weeks, we agreed to work a whole day. Later on we changed it into a weekly meeting of 3-4 hours.

Besides the main theatre group, a larger

number of young people involved in different fields of the *Diskoteater Metropolis project* or *Schlesische 27* became interested in forum theatre.

Once the group became familiar with the methods of forum theatre and stabilised the work in the house, they started to look for partners around the work.

The two forum theatre groups RAA-benschwarz and Sabisa organise different international exchanges and education

schemes with professional theatre pedagogues. We have strong contact with these two groups. Our theatre group took part in a forum theatre event conducted by Barbara Santos.



Being interested in different fields of *Theatre of Intervention* we visited a theatre

performance from *Documentation Theatre*. We invited the director to an open night of our *Philosophical Backstage* project.

In the next step we started to build up a network for the interested audiences according to our topics and the model scene "mobbing and oppression at school".

Mobbing is a popular topic. We proposed and we were also asked by the schools, universities, teacher trainees, and the heads of school of pedagogic to perform this topic. Out of this pool of interest we agreed for four performances so far.

reactions of the participants

In the beginning there were mixed emotions in our group as everybody had collected individual experiences with Forum-Theatre.

Some were even critical towards forum theatre, as they had not been familiar with the line of work and the themes. But playing for an audience was our turning point. Acting was very helpful for us. That demonstrated how actors and the jokers had to interact with the audience. We simply realised that playing theatre is the best thing.



Our first performance was in Schlesische 27. We had invited friends, acquaintances and members of other projects of our culture-house (in November 04). Our topic was 'mobbing and oppression' in school and we created a model-scene for that theme. The students in the audience were the first to connect with the scene. But the rest of the audience were also eager to participate. There were many ideas and proposals. For the following performances we chose an audience to take part especially in the scenes.

We played the same scene on the same day in two different schools for the students of different ages. The students were between 15 and 18. At the end of the scene, the joker discussed the topic with the pupils who had interacted. Together they found many solutions and alternatives. They had a lot of fun. Actually we all had fun, everybody was enthusiastic and curious about our project. They wanted to know what our intention was and if we had any solutions ourselves.

The other classroom consisted of loud and lively children between the age of 12-14. They were focused and followed the scene as intently as the older pupils before. Our next performance will be at the universities especially for teacher trainees and students of pedagogy.



## **Kulturhus Lätting -Sweden**

Lätting is an independent non-political organisation that has existed since 1988 with different projects on a local, national and international level. The main objective is to offer the public different cultural activities

We have been working with forum theatre for many years at Lätting. We have therefore built a network co-operating with a large number of actors on both local and national level. With the same forum theatre but with different actors in the past couple of years we have been touring around Sweden

So for us it was not to start with something new but to continue to use forum theatre in meeting the youngsters.

At the time when we prepared ourselves for forum theatre we played games and did exercises to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere within the group using body language more than words. If we had a theme already then we would start discussing and reflect the outcome of the discussion on the theme, we would perhaps go and look for facts and inspirations.

When we feel that we are all active, and all of us can see the difficulties of

a situation within the theme then we start to improvise the situations and work with the characters. We discuss the mechanism of oppressions, what happens between the people and why to deepen the characters. When we are ready with the essence of the forum theatre then we work with how to meet the spectators. Why should we approach the spectators? It is important that the whole group share the same objectives of meeting the spectators so that the whole thing will not turn into a performance as it is in a traditional theatre.

During the years of working with forum theatre we have experienced, tried and investigated many topics, both on requests from future partners and themes produced within our own group.

Forum theatre enables the spectators to see an event or a situation from the outside and to find different solution for them. It gives you the power to see and realise that every situation can be changed.

Examples of themes we worked with are self oppression, racism, bullying, oppression in a meeting situation and sexual harassment. The subject of drinking and driving were made and performed many years ago and we

have been meeting youngsters all over for nine years. When we started working on it we created a situation where a group of people were sitting and drinking alcohol. When it was time to leave they tried to call a taxi but they didn't get through. They then suggested taking the car. One of the girls in the group tried to stop this, but the scene ended up with all of them getting into the car. The spectators then got the chance to try to change the situations so that the group did not get into the car.

This theme, drinking and driving, was a request from an organisation in Sweden. We started to discuss over the subject. Then we started to discuss in what situations within the theme oppression could take place. We were all very involved with this theme. It was not just forum theatre scenes that we were playing but also images of the effects of this problem. We have the same process with any other theme we work with. We analyse it and then decide if it also applies to us, do we see any difficulties in it.



If we had the right answers we wouldn't need to make forum theatre about any subject. One important objective in forum theatre is that there is no right answers only a lot of different possibilities.

The reaction on the spectators varies a lot but my experience is that if the topic or the theme involves a group performing a play then most certainly it will also involve the spectators. And the spectators become very active and eager to change a situation or stop the oppression.

We have built a local network with our local authority, which is responsible for the youngsters who are not in the ordinary school system.

We have also a network built up within the schools. We would like to develop this network further. This makes the contact with the youngsters even easier. We also co-operate with other associations on both a local and national level for information and financial support.



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Youngsters, activeness, citizenship, cultural diversities, theatre, forum theatre, changes, challenges, development, consciousness... During two years partners and friends from Sweden, Germany, Italy, Greece and Lithuania were dealing with those things/topics mentioned above. And doing it through forum theatre.

This report is *not* designed for those who are experienced in work with forum theatre. Our *aim is to interest inexperienced people* and to encourage them to try something new, in this particular case – Forum Theatre.

Therefore, you'll find "live" reports from each partner country; they will be slightly different, slightly the same, but real and live. What is important to mention is, even with huge differences between partners work, influenced by cultures, backgrounds of people directly involved, working styles, methods used, etc. *more* or less, we came to the same result. We understood it as a good sign for a good work...

Each country report includes a description of the forum theatre process – from the participant's retrieval to their testimonies. Concerning the other part (the beginning, with all the objectives), where you'll find lots of talks and a lot about activeness, active citizenship at local level and so on... we want to clarify the links we see between our work and active citizenship.

For us, active citizenship starts when you see what you want to change and reflecting on how to do it... with awareness inside. This is what forum theatre is all about... Start from your self and one meter around you, then you can talk about society and its activeness.

Enjoy the reading, experience all the processes with us, discover your interest in the use of forum theatre and why you want to be involved with it, get trained for that and try it. Probably, soon we'll read your report...