



Madeira, Portugal

16-17 January 2025

PARTICIPATORY VISIT REPORT

EMPOWER CANVAS



Funded by
the European Union

2023-3-PT02-KA210-YOU-000176401



DAY 1

The day began with an overview of the project, highlighting key milestones and achievements to date. Participants shared updates on the development of the board game and the digital platform, both designed to foster learning and engagement in creative ways.

The session continued with a visit to ArteM's art co-work and gallery-ART HUB Madeira, where participants explored an inspiring collection of artworks. This setting provided a backdrop for sharing best practices, such as **ART residency programs** and the innovative **PhotoPoetic method**, showcasing how art can be a powerful medium for connection and self-expression.

With **Nataly's** expert guidance, participants delved into the **concept of art therapy**, gaining a deeper understanding of its transformative role in fostering resilience among at-risk youth. Through her insights, the group explored how creative expression can serve as a therapeutic outlet, helping individuals process emotions, build self-awareness, and develop coping mechanisms. Nataly emphasised the importance of a supportive and non-judgmental environment in art therapy sessions, which allows youth to explore their inner worlds and find strength in their creative abilities.



Mindfulness and Somatic Awareness for Emotional Resilience

Further, **Diana** led the session on mindfulness, introducing practical techniques to enhance self-awareness and emotional regulation. She demonstrated **box breathing**, a simple yet effective method to manage stress and promote relaxation. Diana also guided participants through **techniques to recognize bodily sensations, often referred to as somatic awareness**, helping them connect with their physical and emotional states. Additionally, she suggested practices such as mindful observation, grounding exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation, all aimed at fostering mindfulness and resilience.

Further, **Raj and Riya** monitored the discussion on addressing misconceptions about at-risk youth, guiding the conversation around the critical issues these young people face. The panel also **explored the specific groups that project partners are currently focusing on through our initiative**. ArteM contributed by bringing their youth representatives into the discussion, offering first-hand perspectives. Together, we examined systemic barriers that at-risk youth encounter, such as lack of access to education, employment opportunities, and social stigma.

We furthered our understanding of business opportunities in art, with a focus on **how creative industries can offer viable career paths for at-risk youth**. A key highlight was the first-hand opportunity to explore businesses in Madeira through the **Caravel Center**, which provided valuable insights into entrepreneurial ventures.



Opportunities for AT-RISK YOUTH



DAY 2



Day 2 began with a visit to Opus Gay Madeira, where we gained valuable insights into the importance of resilience in building self-confidence within LGBTQIA+ groups. **Paulo at Opus Gay Madeira** shared their comprehensive practices, which include psychosocial counseling, connecting individuals with essential resources, and offering therapeutic outlets for self-expression.

They carry out **psychoeducation and prevention work in both public and private schools and institutions through awareness and training actions.** The goal of these initiatives is to raise awareness about issues affecting the LGBTQIA+ community, such as discrimination, bullying, and mental health challenges, ultimately contributing to a better-informed and more inclusive society.

Their work is seen as crucial, as combating misinformation, discrimination, and bullying among younger generations leads to improved personal and academic well-being. This, in turn, reduces failure rates and school dropout while decreasing feelings of depression and anxiety. Their trainings have also equipped professionals across various sectors with the tools to **use more inclusive language, provide accurate information, and reduce stereotypes, fostering better relationships between services, the school community, and society at large. This has not only benefited the LGBTQIA+ community but has also contributed to the personal and professional development of all those involved.**



Testing and Enhancing the Empower Canvas tools for At-Risk Youth

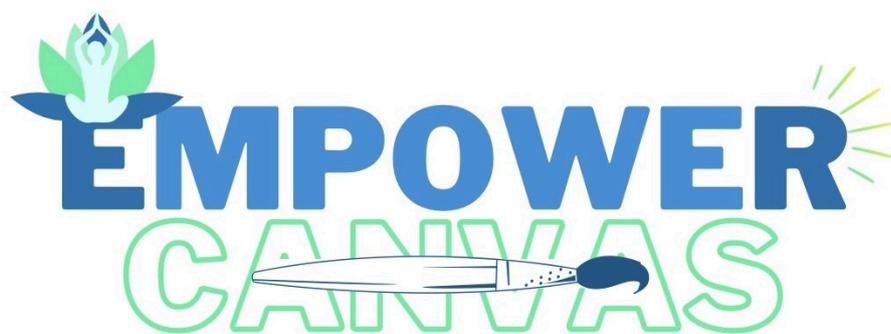
Our visit in Madeira ended with an **engaging session where we tested the board game in both digital and physical formats with a learner group and our project partners**. We not only observed the participants' interactions with the game but also gathered valuable feedback on its usability, educational effectiveness, and potential for engaging at-risk youth. Additionally, we explored the concepts of worksheets that will be integrated into the platform, further enhancing the learning experience.



This hands-on testing allowed us to identify areas for improvement, ensuring that both the game and the worksheets are effective tools for learning and personal development. Ultimately, the session reinforced how these elements align with the main objective of the project—EMPOWER CANVAS—which aims to instill essential life skills, boost self-confidence, and enhance employability among at-risk youth, while integrating art, mindfulness, and resilience-building practices to **ENGAGE, EMPOWER & CONNECT youth and youth workers**.

VALIDATING TOOLS





EMPOWER CANVAS

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