

FINAL PRESS RELEASE

The Open UP project- a four-year project for human creativity

The Open Up (<https://openupeu.com/>), was a project, co-funded by Creative Europe, which aimed to unearth artists, performers, designers and crafts people-with a special focus on young people- from neglected, segregated and underprivileged communities in urban environments in seven European countries: Cyprus, France, Greece, Sweden, Finland, Portugal and Spain. Since 2019, just before the Covid-19 pandemic, and until 2023, the Pierides Foundation, as the Project Leader together with Publics in Helsinki, Université de Picardie Jules Verne (UPJV) in Amiens, University of Thessaly (UTH) in Volos, Valand Academy (VA)- an institution within the University of Gothenburg, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), and New Hand Lab (NHL) in Covilha, co-organized activities aiming at providing a strong, active and sustainable platform for creative synergies. The project aspired to build sustainable art practices amongst underprivileged communities in each participant city and consisted of a transnational network in the fields of art, culture, performing arts, urban and social issues. The **Open Up** project explored how, in this era of division and partition, of segregation and exclusion, culture could play an active role in allowing new forms of community relations to emerge.

The Nicosia Open Up Festival was the culmination and the last activity of the Open Up project. The festival presented the results of all the laboratories, local and transnational, organized during the four years of the programme, 2019-2023, in all seven countries by the 7 co-organisers. The Open Up laboratories aimed to enhance existing knowledge and develop new skills on a multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary level to a large number of participants, while at the same time securing mobility. Despite, the difficulties, and constraints in mobility due to the pandemic during the first three years of the project, all partners managed to implement 60 workshops through which creators were empowered to develop their skills, present their works and create a new business model framework, which enabled them to sustain their work after the end of the Open Up project. To this end, an online platform was created to present all artists works: (<https://platform.openupeu.com/>) .

The Open Up Laboratories employed the Learn-Make-Present model, an iterative process, which culminated in the presentation of new work. Following this model, 1500 participants in all seven countries exchanged and disseminated their skills and knowledge, realised their creative concepts in practice using their acquired knowledge, and promoted their creative results and products to the public and the creative industry through the local Festivals, the Platform and finally the Nicosia Open Up Festival. More about the laboratories was presented in the documentary produced by the University of Amiens that was presented during the Nicosia Open Up Festival.

In all seven countries local festivals were organised (<https://openupeu.com/>), preceding the Nicosia Open up Festival which hosted more than **50 events in 4 days and 130 artists** from Cyprus, Greece, Spain, France, Portugal, Sweden and Finland. These events attracted 4000 visitors and included an open discussion, a documentary projection exhibition, performance, installations, workshops, theatre, dance, audiovisual and vocal performances, video projections, and culinary events. Artists, performers, designers and crafts people from disadvantaged and under-represented groups including migrants and refugees met in Nicosia, a divided city since 1974, to “bridge the gap” and encourage creative people to cooperate with each other beyond constraints and dividing lines.