Dance therapy project according to VAP-NOP principles

 From 2020. to 2022. the Association of Persons with Disabilities “Vuka” from Vukovar was a partner organization in the project "Social Center IN" and the main activity on the project were dance therapy workshops for people with disabilities and the elderly persons. The project was designed and led by Stevan Ristic, choreographer and dance theorist, member of CID, and his assistants were Sladana Malic, psychotherapist and Mirela-Miriana Ristic, communicator, lawyer and member of CID and the one who is currently presenting this project. The idea for him comes from earlier, for several years the team that led this project researched the needs of members of the Association of Persons with Disabilities "Vuka" and found that this type of activity would be suitable for them. Also, for many years we have been conducting dance research projects, the results of which we regularly present at CID Congresses, and we presented some parts of them at preliminary meetings at the CID Assembly in 2019. in Paris. So that the community, through these research activities, got to know and recognize the values ​​of UOSI "Vuka" and in 2020 there was a need to design activities through the project that would help beneficiaries, mostly members of UOSI "Vuka" from Vukovar , but also from Vukovar-Srijem County.

The workshops were part of a mutual project where three associations participated, and the program itself, due to its specificity, was implemented independently for members of the association and associated seniors. The workshops were divided into three basic types of activities:

- Practical dance workshops

- Theoretical dance workshops

- Creative workshops of non-dance activities

A special type of activity, very important for the success of the project, was informal socializing, which acted as a catalyzer and accelerated the achievement of project objectives.

The project is based on the basic principles of dance therapy, meaning, if stress, aging or some other mental process is the cause of physical disorders such as Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis, through dance this process could be rotated 180 degrees, allow the mind to heal the body. prevent the development of these diseases, mitigate the consequences or, perhaps, even cure them. Also, dance therapy seeks to prevent age-related mental disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease or dementia. In this sense, there is a logic, and that is that the mind is "busy" with positive things, such as dance, and not to act negatively on the nervous system and activate the processes that lead to the appearance of these diseases. Respecting these basic principles of dance therapy, the project was implemented according to new, completely original methods and ways of working that fully gave the result, which means that all the goals of the project have been achieved.

Specifically, the activities were divided into 4 basic groups:

- Latino dance culture,

- European dance culture,

- Ballet

- Danube waves

Where the first three types of activities are based on current historical and scientific facts about dance therapy, while the type of activity "Danube Waves" applied completely original methods and principles of work, in accordance with the results of VAP-NOP project which researched the oldest archaic dances of Middle Danube Valley. By the way, let us mention that the VAP-NOP project was presented for the first time in 2016 in Athens at the 44th World Congress of Dance Research, is practically still ongoing, and is successfully developing in several directions, and this part is recognized and financed by the European Social Fund.

In addition to activities related to dance, the importance of creative workshops should be emphasized, especially in the psycho-therapeutic sense, and the coordinator of the workshops, Sladana Malic, with my organizational assistance, made sure that there were various artistic activities. There was also a workshop on the topic of sports and IT culture, which is welcome especially to older people to get better acquainted with the possibilities of modern technology. But most were music therapy workshops, mostly directly related to the topics covered in the dance workshops. Although the principle of interaction was used in all types of activities, its importance came to the fore here, and all users participated in these activities very ambitiously.

And last but not least, we will emphasize the activities of informal socializing, which I mostly held, with the help of the leader and assistant. In particular, through this activity, there was a quality feedback of results and effects from the project beneficiaries, which enabled a very precise evaluation, the presentation of which I am just finishing. It remains to, based on this evaluation, try to find solutions and ideas for moving to a higher level of dance therapy process because this project, as we have said, has achieved all its goals and has done much to include people with disabilities and the elderly. so the positive impact on the community is obvious.

There were no invincible problems in the work, and, in fact, the biggest problem was the COVID situation, but it did not significantly affect the implementation of any activity on the project.