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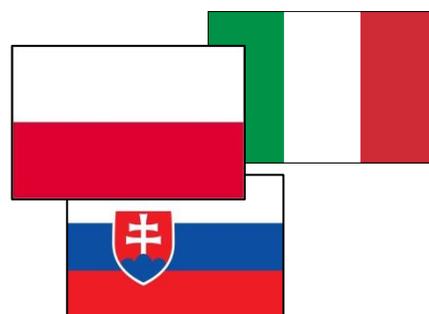


Body and mind harmony

in long-life learning



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Editor:

Barbara Kaszkur-Niechwiej

Co-authors:

Giuseppe D'Agostino, Andrea Ciantar, Paolo Narciso,
Flavia Tricol, Fabio Pandolfi, Katarzyna Szymańska,
Barbara Kamińska-Czubała, Sasa Pastorkova, Ivana Mer



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1. Introduction

It is a well-known truth that well-being, especially in later life, strongly depends on physical, intellectual and social activity. However, the issue of the balance between these activities and the harmony between body and mind is still little known and underestimated.

Movement is disappearing from our daily lives. Various kinds of vehicles, devices and machines are increasingly replacing it and “supporting” us in both private and professional activities.

Physical exercise, sport, fitness, martial arts, dance, singing yoga and so on, are treated as independent entities, as hobbies, separated from the other life activities.

Movement is ceasing to be a normal element of our lives and becoming something exceptional that requires time, space and professional leadership.

Scientific research and evidence showing that physical activity is a crucial element of our well-being and good health, paradoxically causes a bigger divergence of this activity from our lives. Physical activity is important so it needs institutions, experts, standards and definitions. To perform five press-ups is a physical exercise but to lift a heavy bottle from the upper shelf in the kitchen is not.

Doctors say that in order to be healthy, we should perform, for example, 30 minutes of exercise three times a week and take seven thousand steps a day. This shows that movement is treated as a medicine and carefully dosed. We have started to believe that we need experts to tell us how to move. We are losing the awareness of our bodies and, in consequence, the natural wisdom of movement. In the majority of cases, the signals from the body are treated as potentially threatening symptoms and not instructions that we might follow.

Bodily activity, the movements we use in our lives, are also less and less an expression of our individuality; specific handwriting is replaced by typing and individual ways of cooking, cleaning, gardening, performing amateur sports and the like, by standardised algorithms.

Throughout the ages, the physical activities in daily life were important opportunities for social contacts but today, we seldom share them with others – the communal shelling of beans has gone.

Living our lives is not just living – it needs 'diet' instead of eating, 'performing exercises' instead of simply moving and 'therapy' instead of talking to friends.

The mind and intellectual activities have come to dominate our lives. Many people just live inside their minds, treating their thoughts as reality and their bodies as a troublesome container or vehicle for their brains. The mind, instead of guiding life, has started to dominate. Instead of actually experiencing life, we often only think about it.

The current, difficult, post-pandemic time has brought new challenges. Increased stress, isolation and uncertainty about the future, especially in the older generation, have created a more urgent and demanding need for activities that balance body, mind and social contact. In this new situation, some old social problems like insufficient digital literacy among the older generation and ecological threats, with some inefficiency of the healthcare system, have become more visible and more threatening.

Knowledge concerning the significance of body awareness and body and mind harmony is still inadequate among adult educators, trainers and learners.

To contribute to solving the problems mentioned above, three organisations from Italy, Poland and Slovakia had constituted a partnership and developed a 20-months project “Body and mind harmony in long-life learning”. Besides reaching the project goals, we also want to show that movement is an expression and experience of life and its greatest pleasure.

Movere ergo sum!!

2. The project: partners, goals, activities

“**Body and mind harmony in long-life learning**” was a Small-scale Partnerships project founded by the ErasmusPlus programme – Adult Education section, Key Action 2.

It lasted for 15 months from 1 of December 2021 to 1 of March 2023 and involved three European organisations from Poland, Italy and Slovakia. The Polish organisation – the Addenda Foundation (www.fundacja-addenda.pl)– was the project coordinator and initiator.

The Addenda Foundation is a non-profit NGO, located in Krakow, which operates in the sphere of non-formal and informal adult education, focused mainly on middle-aged and elderly people. Its main interest is innovation, especially in the areas where education meets and interlaces with culture, physical activity, healthcare, social and everyday life.



The Italian partner - **the People’s University of Sport** (www.universitapopolaredellosport.it) – is a large non-profit organisation located in Rome. It provides a wide range of courses and learning activities, also for educators, including almost all kinds of physical activities, with special attention to adults from disadvantaged groups such as the elderly and disabled.

The Slovak partner – **the Civic association Spectaculum** (spectaculum.sk) - is an independent organization working in the field of music culture, education and therapy, located in Banská Štiavnica. The association organizes various cultural music activities, local, national and international, and also music education and voice classes with elements of voice and music therapy.



The main project goal was to increase quality in the work and practices of the partner organisations by exchanging and developing ideas on implementing more mind and body balance in adult education in later life.

We wanted to find new ways to combine physical and intellectual elements, in various forms of adult education, and to increase the educational dimension of the body-related activities, performed in partner organisations. We also wished to encourage our learners to introduce more conscious movements and body awareness into their everyday lives.

A very important element of our project was increasing the awareness of educators, trainers and learners of the role and value of mind and body harmony.

The “side effects” of our project were: development of key competences (personal and digital), support the inclusion and increase diversity of our present and potential learners and building partner organisations capacity to work transnationally.

To achieve our goals we have organised a lot of **activities** on national, international and virtual level, the most important of which were:

- ❖ exchanging and developing partners’ specific experience and knowledge of mind and body balance and preparing propositions (by 2 per partner) for implementing this
- ❖ organising international partner meetings in each partner country. Each meeting beside the coordinators’ meeting, included innovative examples of workshops (concerning both intellectual and physical activities), developed and run by each partner organisation and cultural integration events.
- ❖ preparing, running and evaluating local activities which tested developed ideas
- ❖ working on improving and enriching the regular activities of each partner organisation on the base of new experience and knowledge shared and gained during the project.



3. Ideas for mind and body balancing

All the partners reflected on their knowledge and experience on the elements of mind and body balance in their specific educational actions: are they present, how to emphasize, enhance and develop them. It was done by discussion meetings, brain storming, searching for materials related to the topic. Each partner organised an online meeting for all, to present and discuss gained outcomes and conclusions. As a result of this activity each partner prepared propositions of 2 ideas how to increase mind and body balance.

Ideas from Poland:

I. Add movement back into your everyday life

Introduction:

We live in a world where “life” is mostly sedentary, and “exercise” is the one or two hours a week we set aside to fit in some movement. Movement is disappearing from our daily lives. We walk less and less and use various devices to do everyday tasks for us. Physical effort is perceived as tiring and unnecessary and we try to avoid it. Sedentary lifestyle has become common. Movement becomes a separate, independent entity - “an action for health” - which requires a special place, time, technical aids and professional support. Our body is no longer master and expert of our own moment, and feelings like pleasure or discomfort are no longer our guides. We must have special devices, which tell us how we feel. All of this means that, for some people, physical activity is perceived as a duty, a burden, something that is difficult, exhausting and time consuming.

Our Idea is to adapt everyday tasks to become an alternative to standard fitness training. We want to show that physical activity (the one that is good for our health) may be entwined smoothly into our daily lives. By implementing this idea, we wish to decrease the distance between movement performed during the everyday tasks and movement performed during fitness training and to encourage people not to avoid physical effort in their daily lives. And as a side effect we want people to make friends with their bodies, to be more attentive and kind to them.

Where to be used:

The idea can be used to develop regular activities (training courses) or as an element, a kind of insertion into other fitness activities.

For whom:

It is most suitable for adults, especially middle-aged and older, who are not very keen on or afraid of or are not able (for various reasons) to perform regular physical activity.

Venue, teaching aids:

The Venue must allow the performance of the daily tasks we are going to work on (activity performed in the kitchen, garden, office etc.). It does not require special equipment – as “teaching aids” we will use items normally use in our everyday lives. For some exercises we may use short movies and pictures illustrating how a human motor system works.

Description:

The idea focuses on showing and practising everyday tasks (simple and more complicated) – as an alternative to standard fitness training. Each exercise will be preceded with explanations concerning the mechanics of a given movement (everyday task), supported by a short movie, or pictures if necessary. The instructor will indicate the movement elements which may cause abnormal or/and excessive loading of a motor system and the benefits of performing movement attentively.

During the classes, participants practise the movement under the supervision of an instructor, then practice it at home and, at the beginning of the next meeting, they share their experience and observations - what was good, bad, easy, difficult - with an instructor and the group. It is very important to encourage the participants to be attentive and to observe their bodies and emotions with care and tenderness. Typical exercises may be: taking an item from the upper kitchen shelf and placing it on the table, drying with a towel after bathing/shower, taking on and off clothes....

Additional remarks:

To make our training more attractive and to encourage people to think more about the problem, we can organise “The museum of forgotten movements”. Participants are asked to find a movement which is no longer performed in our lives – like for instance, wringing out wet washing. Instructors should involve their creativities to make the best use of this museum.



II. Movement and emotions

Introduction:

Emotions are strongly linked to the body. They are a kind of body expression and, categorised by the mind, they become feelings. Emotions inform us about the internal and external situation. They report the state of the body to the mind and/or they evoke specific body reaction to the external situation (threat, potential pleasure, etc.).

Each emotion is represented and expressed by (and strongly linked to) the specific body configuration (tension of muscles, chemistry of the body fluids etc.). To some extent it also goes in the opposite direction – certain body posture may be subtly felt as a matching emotion. Strong emotion caused by meaningful life situations may be imprinted and trapped in the body. This often causes mental problems.

Our idea is to show links between body and emotion and how movement and using senses may help in emotion management.

Where to be used:

This idea can be used to develop regular activities (training course) or as an element, a kind of insertion into another fitness and standard intellectual educational activities.

For whom:

It is most suitable for adults, especially middle-aged and older, who suffer from the all kinds of stress.

Venue, teaching aids:

The place for regular training should be cosy, quiet and comfortable with an atmosphere of peace and safety; we will need mats, some items for auto-massage, and audio-visual materials like movies, music, pictures etc. that are connected to the theme of exercise

Description:

The idea focuses on showing and practising links between body and emotions and how we can manage our emotions through movement. All practice will be directed toward increasing body awareness. Each exercise will be preceded with explanations concerning the trained element.

We will work on such issues like:

- the ability to feel, to be in touch with our body and to feel and recognize how the body is shaped by the emotions,
- learning and practising how to curb and release emotions and tensions through movement,

- learning and practising how conscious breathing may help with dealing with emotions
- using music, sound, pictures and movies for seeking and recognizing emotions in the body, and increasing body feeling
- learning and practising links between a certain body posture and certain movements and feeling yourself as a winner, ready to act or victim, submissive etc.
- exercises “tense - release”
- technique of auto- massage.

Ideas from Italy:

I. Body-mind connection through movement

Introduction:

Taiji Quan is a time-tested art that leads to an increased awareness of the relationship between mind and body. Behind every movement of Taiji, we find the philosophy of yin-yang and, for this reason, the commitment of muscular strength is not required. Greater inner awareness, regardless of social and cultural conditions, improves one's ability to practise. Breathing can be an excellent metaphor for yin-yang philosophy, The idea is to be able, through some practices of perception of the breath, to rediscover a connection with body movement and, with emotions and thought, enhance a knowledge that is not only descriptive of the natural processes of connection but a sharing and awareness of their development.

Where to be used:

During regular courses.

For whom:

No physical or cultural requirements are necessary, the movements do not require physical effort, and are therefore also suitable for adults in old age, anyone who has an interest in increasing their awareness in the body-mind connection.

Venue, teaching aids:

Very suitable outdoors if conditions allow, inside a room with space to be able to move comfortably. Possibly without distracting external noises.

Description:

We can divide the practice of the subject into six steps

- 1) perception of breath
- 2) the mind follows the breath
- 3) the breath follows the mind
- 4) the breath moves the body
- 5) body-mind moves with the breath
- 6) practice with a partner.



II. Increasing mindfulness by using traditional Japanese martial art

Introduction:

Mindfulness process to achieve and improve self and social awareness through traditional trainings and exercises coming from Budo (Japanese traditional martial arts) and more specifically from Aikido.

Starting from a self-observing position which includes breath, movement and perception of the space-time we can dramatically improve our abilities to recognize, understand and manage our emotional, sensorial and mental bodies in order to act with full awareness instead of reacting automatically.

Where to be used:

As an element of physical activities, workshops etc.

For whom:

Suitable for adults of all ages - no background in martial arts or meditation is required, no need of special physical conditions, everyone can practice these exercises.

Venue, teaching aids:

Outdoor or indoor training are both eligible, assuming that enough room is available to perform the exercises with ease. A quiet environment is preferable. It is suggested that students wear such clothes as a track suit or other comfortable clothes.

No special equipment is needed although it might be useful to have a hard pillow to sit on for meditation and a light blanket to lie on.

Description:

We will practise three activities

- 1) Mindfulness introduction with a guided meditation to experience body-mind connection through breath awareness and visualization
- 2) Traditional Japanese energetic workout to experience our bodies ability to connect energy (Ki), breath and awareness
- 3) Magic Circle exercise to experience the ability to connect with others and share our body-mind abilities to reach a common goal.

Ideas from Slovakia:

I. Bringing harmony through the connection with your Voice

Introduction:

Body/mind activities – developing concentration, relaxation and the connection with ourselves through the Voice work

Where to be used:

As an independent training. The elements may be used as introduction to any physical and intellectual activities.

For whom:

Adults willing to go through a process of self-discovery , searching for restoring the inner balance and peace

Venue, teaching aids:

An outdoor space is very supportive, in general, a natural ambience, as well as an indoor place with good light and suitable energy is also preferable. We would need only chairs, yoga mats, cushions, blankets, water and some snacks afterwards.

Description:

There are 4 core parts of the Voice workshop:

1. Body Work – exercises to help to relax the body and to release tension. It also enables us to raise the awareness and consciousness of the body as the space of resonance.

2. Partner and group body work in order to build confidence in oneself and with the collective, including Body/Mind exercises , movement exercises connecting the two brain hemispheres with breathing
3. Breath Work – to bring the consciousness to the different parts of the body through the movement of breathing, deep concentration and relaxation obtained by breathing exercises, release of tension
4. Voice exercises – are a complex system connecting mind and body again . Developing the ability to open and discovering the Voice through gentle techniques , resonating the body through the Voice, releasing tension, singing in pair and in a group, overcoming fear and leaving the comfort zone in order to express oneself.



II. Increasing the balance between mind and body by voice and breath small daily practice

Where to be used:

It can be implemented during breaks at work, while performing daily routine actions (like washing dishes, cleaning the house, sitting in the garden etc..)

For whom:

For everyone

Venue, teaching aids:

In any place one can stop for a moment. No aids required.

Description:

Exercise A: connecting with yourself through your breath

- are planted firmly on the ground, knees are flexible, pelvis straight and in line with the spine. On the top of the head we imagine a string that is pulling the head up which is creating the space between the vertebrae. Shoulders are pulled to the sides, making a triangle with the ears. The lower abdomen is relaxed.
- we make one free in-breath and out-breath
- we start to breathe in focus on filling the lower abdomen as far as the pelvic area, then we expand the air to our backs, filling the lower back, the area of abdomen, diaphragm and chest.
- with out-breath the lower belly moves gently inwards, creating support for the pull of outgoing breath. The diaphragm and chest stay open too. There is a feeling of openness and expansion in the chest and opening of the centre of the chest while exhaling.
- we repeat this activity at least seven times. Each time we try to slow down and prolong our in-breath and out-breath. We observe the breathing movement with our inner body vision/ perception. The breathing movement is not created from the outer muscle activity but from the inner body space by the breath.
We visualize the breath like a spiral starting down in the lower abdomen/pelvis and going up with out-breath, opening the chest

Exercise B - Create and listen to your own tone:

- we connect with the previous breathing work, we breathe in – filling the abdomen and with the out-breath we sing first an “mmmmm” sound which intuitively arises. The tone is sustained and soft, without any kind of forcing. Brumendo sound.
- for this, the whole body is relaxed and in the position we set up at the beginning. The mind is focused on listening and perceiving the sound in the body as well in space. The lips are together and relaxed, we can feel small vibrations in the lips.
- we repeat the exercise at least seven times, perceiving our body as a music instrument which is tuning in to the most open and relaxed sound. With each repetition, we continue to observe the resonance in the body.
- we can open the sound “mmmm”- to the vowel O. Be sure to pronounce it round (your lips are creating a circle shape) so that the sound can easily go out.
- you feel the release of the sound and the Voice resonating in space. The important feeling here is to open, do not push, listen, observe and release.

4. Local activities

The local activities were meant to test and enrich the ideas that we had developed for mind and body balancing. Each partner had performed 12 hours of the activity divided into 6 to 12 sessions, organised in the various settings: in the classroom, in homes, in public places and in natural surroundings. There were altogether 91 participants, including teachers.

The key element of the activity was engaging both learners and teachers in discussion on their experience and formulating conclusions. There was also a careful evaluation performed, for which we used a common questionnaire and non-verbal forms, such as DiXit cards.

In Poland:

There were 3 groups of participants involved:

- A. people 65+, living in rural regions, most of them less well-educated
- B. people 50+, in difficult life situations like stressful jobs, low income and personal problems
- C. adult educators and activists

There were 7 sessions with the following topics:

1. The importance of everyday movement and conscious breathing
2. The basic movement models in our lives, the ways of changing positions
3. Training of the nervous system and neuromuscular coordination, introduction to mindfulness
4. Learning to adopt a stable, secure and ergonomic standing position
5. Learning to feel our own body, its strength, and the external forces that affect it
6. Learning how to use voice and breathing for relaxation and increasing mindfulness
7. How to implement elements of activities balancing mind and body in various educational and social activities (on-line meeting for educators and activists)

Conclusions:

All the participants, especially those from rural regions, were very enthusiastic and eager to take part in the classes. The approach, ideas and activities were new for them, but were mostly perceived as a new perspective, a new point of view on the well-known elements of life. One older women told us that she had not sat on the floor for 30 years, another reported that, using acquired knowledge, she was able to prepare 150 dumplings without being tired!

The proposed exercises were simple and we constantly pointed out and emphasised their usefulness in everyday life. A very good idea was to use humour, surprise elements and also the knowledge and skills already possessed by the participants.

It turned out that it was attractive to use for items for exercises such as tennis balls which participants could take home.

Using different senses, the regular ones like taste, smell, hearing, perceiving colours and touch, but also slightly unusual concepts like “hearing” your voice inside the body, feeling the influence of gravity, experiencing tension and relaxation of the muscles, turned out to be the perfect idea. We think that this direction should be subject to more research and developed to be smoothly implemented in all kinds of educational activities for older adults.



Evaluation summary:

The evaluation was made using two methods: a questionnaire and a non-verbal form – a set of fantasy pictures (DiXit card). The second method turned out to be very good and successful in case of less well-educated participants from the countryside. Also the implemented method of filling in the questioner in two-person teams proved to be perfect for this group of people.

The general conclusions from the evaluation were:

- very positive assessment of the general idea and the classes
- underlining the relaxing influence of the activities and their usefulness in everyday life
- increased motivation and willingness to participate in this kind of class in the future
- highly appreciated friendly, relaxed atmosphere and teachers' commitment
- strong opinions that such activities should be continued

It is also worth noting that the non-verbal evaluation method was willingly used by the participants and revealed hidden, unconscious, difficult to express attitudes and opinions, like treating this kind of activity as a remedy for ageing, respect for education and assessing of the general atmosphere.

In Italy:

The participants were middle-aged and elderly people living in a big city plus physical activities teachers.

There were 12 sessions with the following topics:

1. Perception of breath
2. The mind follows the breath - the breath follows the mind
3. The breath moves the body
4. Body-mind moves with the breath - exercise with a partner
5. Mindfulness introduction with guided meditation to experience body-connection through breathing - awareness and visualization
6. Traditional Japanese energetic workout to experience our body's ability to connect energy (Ki), breath and awareness
7. Magic Circle exercise - to experience the ability to connect with others and share our body-mind abilities to reach a common goal
8. Body exercises with reflection and attention to the optimization of daily movement
9. Body exercises with reflection and attention to the optimization of daily movement
10. Exercises "tens-release"
11. Movement exercises connecting the two brain hemispheres together with breathing
12. Body Work – exercises to help to relax the body and release tension

Conclusions:

There were face-to-face meetings run and attended by teachers and some of them were direct participants of this project.

The activities were included into the regular courses run by our organisation, in the form of special lessons devoted to experimenting with the ideas proposed by all the partners. In our students we noticed some interest and eagerness in to experience the mind-body integration approach but, at the end of the experiment, we perceived some difficulties with implementing this more global approach to mind-body balancing with students who were accustomed to following strict disciplines such as dance, Aikido, or Feldenkrais. Perhaps it would be easier to take people out of the regular cycle of lessons completely by involving them in specific workshops on this subject.

But the identified difficulties were also stimulating as they made us think that it would be interesting to continue developing activities in this direction, with more students and more teachers involved.

Finally, we had decided that each teacher involved in these testing activities would develop at least two suggestions to be used for improving the quality of life of the students, starting from the knowledge developed within the taught discipline.



Evaluation summary:

The answers were prepared by all the participants together during the final follow up, in different groups and at different times.

In general, the proposed activities were met with interest and all the participants tried to follow the proposed exercises. Many participants found the proposed activities stimulating.

The most interesting answers for three questions from the questionnaires:

1. Do you find the performed/explained activity/ idea useful in your life (private/professional)? If so – provide some explanations.

- “We understood where to work to focus attention to fill the "gaps" in order to achieve elasticity, ductility, plasticity and flexibility. as in exercise so in life. This can be useful, for example, in not being inflexible when dealing with everyday problems.” (learner).
- “The power of the breath to calm emotion and the mind is the basis for remaining calm when the stress-work link increases.” (learner).
- “When I did the “centering” exercises, it was as if all the parts of me came together. Instead, every day I feel that some parts of me are little considered,” (learner).
- “I was able to reflect on my relationship with the surrounding people by working together to achieve a common goal during the proposed activity.” (learner).

- “I felt like a flowing river and I recognized that I have this kind of energy in me.” (teacher)
- “Paying attention to breathing during the proposed activity allowed me to pay attention to breathing during daily life. When I feel tired or stressed, I remember to revert to paying attention to my breathing.” (learner).
- “I learned some traditional Japanese energy gymnastic exercises and I do some of them when I have free time.” (learner).
- “The “magic circle” it is useful to understand the feeling of the group and I think that I’ll go on to propose it to my students too.” (teacher).

**2. Was the performed/explained activity/ idea inspiring, moving, interesting or new?
If so – provide some explanations.**

- “I had never tried any of the proposed breathing exercises even though I have done various sports during my life.” (learner).
- “I found the approach based on breathing connected with a movement very interesting and had never tried it before in this way. I will try it during my classes.” (teacher).
- “The exercise of the circle can be proposed with different supports and in different situations and I found it enlightening.” (learner).
- “I would like to understand more about the principles behind energy exercises and will buy a book on the subject.” (learner).
- “Working in pairs is a type of exercise that allows us to realize individual limits and accept the limits of others. It seemed useful to propose it at the end of the work together.” (learner).
- “I began to understand how the movement is more effective and less forceful when guided by the breath. I will deepen this concept during the activities I carry out on a daily basis.” (learner).

3. Was there in the performed/explained activity/idea anything you would like to add, change, delete or develop? If so – provide some explanations.

- “I wish we could add more time to share the sensations experienced.” (learner).
- “I think it would be useful to learn some combined breathing and movement exercises to practice while lying down. They might be useful to practice in the morning or in the evening, even alone.” (learner).
- “The thing I would like to add is being able to touch the teacher's chest to feel how the rib cage expands using low and deep breathing.” (learner).
- “The proposed activity was too long for me. Maybe for me it would be better to shorten it to 45 minutes (learner).
- “Associating the practical laboratory with a theoretical one might/would be useful.” (learner).

In Slovakia:

The participants were women of a wide range of age from 20 to 50 years (mothers, single ladies, women who are staying mostly at home, students and women with advanced careers).

There were 6 sessions with the following topics:

1. Body posture and breathing as the basic tools for body/mind balance and usage of Voice
2. Development of the tone, using subtle and gentle techniques to open the Voice
3. Working with Voice focusing on concentration and listening to the tone, effortless singing
4. Working with body relaxation techniques in order to open and relax the Voice
5. Using all the previous tools in order to experience singing in the group
6. Practice focused on developing the gentle practices of the Werbeck method in order to work with Voice.

Conclusions:

For the Voice work, we deliberately chose the natural environment as we feel it is very beneficial to the opening of oneself and release of tension. And it worked really successfully. This was a very interesting group of participants – women in different age groups as well as lifestyles – mothers at home, students and women with developed careers. But the needs seemed quite similar: peace of mind, calmness, connection with oneself and just “switching off” the mind.

I chose different kinds of exercise dividing them each day in order to build up the continuous Voice work which connects the elements taught.

After each workshop, a task was given to work on until the next day. This was appreciated as the participants kept this work in the mind as well in practice. The exercises were simple and the short ones were part of the daily routine. It was intended to find small moments during the day when one can connect with oneself through one's Voice.

The natural environment and the group work also enables the sharing of feelings, expectations and one's intentions more easily. At the beginning of each workshop, the leader asked each participant to use one word which she would like to dedicate the session to. This was also a useful tool in how to share the one's state in the present moment and to build up more confidence and sharing thoughts in the group. This automatically led to the creation and enhancement of the feeling of community.

Meeting each other for the first time, but finding out that, in the core of the being, we all have the same needs.

We have realized that working with Voice in the group is a powerful tool for bringing harmony into daily life. Something that worked very well was starting the session with intention clearly shared within the group. Then we continue with the body work – becoming more rooted, feeling the body more and releasing tension. , after which we continue to work with breathing and become more conscious about the breathing movements. Then comes the work with the tone interconnected with the body and breathing.



Evaluation summary:

The evaluation was undertaken using a simple questionnaire. The participants completed it at home and then returned it by e-mail.

It was pleasing to see how Voice work influenced participants' daily lives in being more aware of body posture, breathing and Voice and how they perceive changes when it comes to expressing themselves and communicating in their daily life situation.

Their reported that they notice not only change in perceiving and using their Voice but as well in their general well-being, the state of the presence. They mention calmness and the benefits that Voice work has also brought to their professional lives, enabling them to communicate easily and be more confident.

The singing in the group was very appreciated so they continue to sing and the group is also continuing with meetings in order to learn new songs and work with Voice . This project brings not only implementation of Voice work into daily life, but also beautiful connections on a personal level.

5. Implementation of the project results

Implementation of the project results into regular activities in partner organisations was a very important part of the project. All the partners had organised special meetings for staff and learners representatives to discuss how to make the best use of the knowledge and experiences gained during the course of the project.



The outcomes of these meetings are as follows:

In Poland:

Exchanging, sharing and developing partners' experience and knowledge concerning mind and body balance has brought new ideas and inspirations, and deepened our reflection and practice on this issue. Taking inspiration from both the project discussions and from what we have observed in our partners' organisations, we are enriching and developing the regular activities of our organisation on a few levels:

- A. we have designed two new series of activities, addressed to people 60+, which will be launched before the end of the project:
 - 1. seminars "Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises in Practice" - addressed to the people living in a big city,
 - 2. workshop "The art of the good life" – addressed to people living in rural regions
- B. we are introducing a new, more holistic, approach to joining physical and mental aspects in our activities. This approach, which draws inspiration from some eastern body arts, such as Aikido and Tai Ji, allow us to treat the movement, breathing and consciousness as a single system, and detect it not only during specific activities but, most of all, in daily life. One result of this approach is that we have developed classes

showing how to perform daily activities in a way which is beneficial to our mind and body balance,

- C. we are considering how to use public spaces, the places of cultural and natural significance, for the organisation of open educational activities,
- D. we are encouraging our educators and learners to introduce small practices which harmonise mind and body, (eg. short breath and voice exercises) into both their professional and private lives,
- E. we intend to introduce more physical elements for example the small practices mentioned above, into our educational (intellectual) classes
- F. we have gained a more clear and concrete view of our organisation's development and we have prepared a list of ideas we wish to us in our future projects.

In Italy:

One of our initial goals was the implementation of the experience gained by our teachers who participated in face-to-face and online meetings within the BaMhiL project in the annual cultural proposal of the Popular University of Sport.

In fact, the teachers who participated in the project were able to pass on new ideas and procedures exchanged and learned during the meetings with the European partners. Expert teachers have introduced practical sessions expressly focused on body-mind balance within their class groups. In some meetings with their colleagues, they were able to exchange the experiences learned for the purpose of greater dissemination within our associative system.

Within the cycle of lessons proposed in our association, special sessions have been included, at the beginning or at the end of each meeting, to experiment with the ideas proposed by project partners. We noticed great interest from the students, who have been able to broaden their personal experience thanks also to the new mind-body integration approach.

Above all, the teachers involved in the project have started activities directly linked to the set objectives. In particular: the "Walk and Bones for life" activity by P. Vizioli for joint well-being and improvement of coordination due to awareness of movement; the "Aikido" activity of P. Narciso has implemented its training offer by inserting meditation sessions and traditional energy rebalancing exercises; F. Pandolfi's "Taijiquan" activity paid greater attention to the aspects of breathing and harmonization exercises proposed and developed over the duration of the project.

All of this is now a structural part of our annual proposal.

Forthcoming developments will see all our teachers increasingly involved in making these experiences accessible, facilitating the learning of their students with suggestions on their personal lifestyle, supporting daily body practices, and inducing reflections on the improvements acquired in their own well-being.

In Slovakia:

The interaction with our partners was very inspiring on how to implement body/mind balance in daily life and how important is it to one's well-being. Consideration of this fact also influenced the planning of future activities of our organisation in order to build up to the next workshops on this important principle – which is harmonizing the body and mind. Witnessing the different approaches and various exercises and ideas from partners organisations has influenced us to implement this new knowledge in our educational activities, lessons and workshops.

- For 2023 we are planning a creative writing music workshop together with voice education in order to enhance the self-development of participants. Working both with mind and body will enhance their full creative potential.
- We are also planning to implement yoga exercises and simple movement practices into the activities of the organization and during the Voice workshop activities
- The next step is to introduce breathing, Voice and movement techniques to the musicians we are working with in order to enrich their daily routine and diminish the stress level before performing . And how to implement the simple breathing and voice exercises in their daily routine.
- One of our educators started to work with Paolo Narciso (member of the Italian group) in self-development, and mindfulness techniques, which enrich her Voice work and the teaching of her students at deeper level.



1. Additional resources

To get a wider perspective on the main project topic: "The harmony between mind and body" and to contribute to the project's dissemination, all the partners proposed some external resources; books and video materials and they also produced their own materials: articles published on the EPALE platform and videos.

It turned out that both written and video materials concerning our topic are so varied, rich and numerous that we decided to present only some examples of the books we found the most valuable. We do not suggest any video materials - as the choice is huge and the status (commercial, free) is not always clear.

Our choice of 11 interesting books

1. Ronald D. Siegel - *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*
2. Thích Nhất HạnhThe - *Art of Living: Peace and Freedom in the Here and Now*
3. Gertrude E.M. Anscombe - *Intention*
4. Barry Magid - *Ending the Pursuit of Happiness*
5. Nachmanovitch Stephen - *The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life*
6. Jon Kabat-Zinn – *Full Catastrophe Living*
7. Ruthy Alon -*Mindful Spontaneity: Returning to the Movement Nature Meant*
8. Paul Crowte - *Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness*
9. Leon & Welch - *Bodymind & Voice: Foundations of Voice Education*
10. Valborg Werbeck-Svärdström - *Uncovering the Voice*
11. Green Barry, Gallwey Timothy -*The Inner Game of Music*

The project materials:

EPALE articles:

1. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/maly-projekt-wielki-temat>
- 1.a <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/small-project-big-topic>
2. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/przywrocmy-ruch-do-codziennego-zycia>
3. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/ludzie-pomysly-inspiracje>
4. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/ruch-jest-darem-czyli-o-aktywnosci-fizycznej-w-starszym-wieku>
5. <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/pl/blog/od-cogito-ergo-sum-do-movere-ergo-sum>

Videos:

the project video:	https://youtu.be/oiBnE5bkHrE
from Poland	https://youtu.be/3ulp6SSjpdA
from Italy	https://youtu.be/zYVTuxFP53s
from Slovakia	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDwzJ2YjEqI