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Case studies:
Learning Scenario of IFIKE: Clay your Thoughts

Introduction to the location

Location

The **Museum of Cycladic Art**, established by the Nicholas P. Goulandris Foundation, is located at the heart of Athens, Greece. It was selected as the venue for the AIDA project piloting due to its accessibility, workshop facilities, and relevance to the project's activities, especially considering its experience with dementia patients. The museum houses a significant collection of Cycladic artifacts, fostering an environment conducive to learning and creativity for visitors of all ages, including children, families, and dementia patients. Its central location in Athens ensures easy access for participants and their caregivers, providing an optimal setting for the successful implementation of the AIDA project activities.

Location

The Museum of Cycladic Art emphasizes its dedication to the study and promotion of ancient Greek and Cycladic art. Its programs and workshops are designed to engage visitors in the appreciation and understanding of ancient cultures, supporting the museum's role as an educational and cultural hub in Athens.

The AIDA team for the pilot sessions conducted at the Museum of Cycladic Art in Athens, Greece, comprised of IFIKE Coordinators and Museum Professionals.

https://cycladic.gr/en/

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Introduction to the partners

Associated partners

The **Museum of Cycladic Art**, founded by the Nicholas P. Goulandris Foundation, is renowned for its extensive collection of Cycladic and Ancient Greek artifacts. Located in the heart of Athens, Greece, the museum has established itself as a cultural and educational hub, dedicated to the study, preservation, and promotion of ancient Aegean and Cypriot art and culture.

Within the context of the AIDA project, the Museum of Cycladic Art played an important role in creating a conducive learning environment for individuals diagnosed with dementia. The museum's involvement included providing access to its collections and spaces for workshops that were designed to align with the project's objectives. These sessions utilized the museum's artifacts as educational tools to engage participants in discussions and activities that stimulated cognitive engagement and creativity.

https://cycladic.gr/en/

MUSEUM OF CYCLADIC ART
NICHOLAS AND DOLLY GOULANDRIS FOUNDATION

Associated partners

The **Alzheimer Athens Association**, established in 2002, is a pivotal organization in Greece dedicated to supporting individuals affected by Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, along with their families and caregivers. The association offers a wide range of services, including information dissemination, education, psychological support, and advocacy for better care and research into dementia.

In the AIDA project, the Alzheimer Athens Association was instrumental in recruiting participants for the piloting sessions held at the Museum of Cycladic Art. By leveraging its network and resources, the association facilitated the engagement of a target group that could significantly benefit from the therapeutic and educational activities designed within the AIDA framework.

https://alzheimerathens.gr/en/

ALZHEIMER ATHENS

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Clay your thoughts – Group 1

Group 1:
Number of Participants and Carers:

- Each session welcomed 4 participants along with their relatives or carers, totaling 8 attendees per session. This arrangement fostered a supportive and engaging environment, allowing for personalized guidance and attention from the facilitators.

Setting and Layout of the Space:

- The "Clay Your Thoughts" scenario was conducted in dedicated workshop spaces within the Museum of Cycladic Art. These areas were arranged to promote an intimate and comfortable setting conducive to creative expression and interaction. The layout included workstations with seating arranged to face the facilitator, ensuring ease of communication and instruction. Adequate space was provided around each station to accommodate movement and accessibility for participants and their carers.

Artworks, Museum Artefacts, or Exhibits Used:

- The "Clay Your Thoughts" learning scenario leveraged the Museum of Cycladic Art's rich collection of artifacts, particularly focusing on Cycladic idols. These ancient sculptures, characterized by their simplicity and abstract forms, served as the inspiration for the session. Participants were introduced to these artifacts through a guided tour that highlighted the historical and cultural significance of the idols. Following the tour, individuals were encouraged to express their interpretations and emotions elicited by the sculptures through clay modeling, allowing for a hands-on, creative exploration of the artifacts' themes and forms.

Participant feedback:

- "I liked working with the clay." – **Participant**
- "Seeing the enjoyment of the sessions was quite meaningful." - **Caregiver**
- "I'm glad we had the chance to tour the museum." – **Participant**
- "The calm environment of the museum made them (the participants) feel comfortable." - **Caregiver**

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Clay your thoughts – Group 1

Group 1:
In the "Clay Your Thoughts" learning scenario, participants embarked on a guided tour of the Museum of Cycladic Art, where they were introduced to a curated selection of Cycladic idols and artifacts. These artifacts, known for their minimalistic and abstract forms, served as the inspiration for the day's activities.

Museum Tour and Activities:
The tour was designed to be interactive, with museum professionals providing insights into the historical and cultural significance of the Cycladic artifacts. Following the tour, participants gathered in a workshop space within the museum, where they were encouraged to reflect on their impressions and feelings about the artifacts they had encountered.

Materials Used:
Clay: Soft, malleable clay was provided for the hands-on activity, chosen for its ease of use and sensory benefits.
Modeling Tools: Basic sculpting tools were provided to assist in shaping and detailing the clay models.

Outputs from the Sessions:
The primary outputs were clay models inspired by Cycladic idols seen during the museum tour. These varied in shape and detail, showing each participant's unique interpretation and response to the art. The models represented participants' engagement with the artifacts, offering both a deeper connection to the museum's collection and a therapeutic avenue for self-expression.

Learnings:

Participants may feel isolated if seated too far apart, hindering group cohesion and focus.	**Engagement in Group Setting** Arrange seating to facilitate visibility and conversation among participants, ensuring tables are close enough to foster a group dynamic.
Participants may feel pressured to create a perfect or final product, which can cause stress or disengagement.	**Valuing the Process Over the Product** Emphasize the experience of storytelling through art, regardless of the outcome. Encourage sharing stories and memories that the art evokes, validating all contributions.
Not all participants may feel comfortable or interested in participating at all times, which could lead to feelings of frustration or compulsion.	**Participant Autonomy** Not all participants may feel comfortable or interested in participating at all times, which could lead to feelings of frustration or compulsion.

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Challenges	Solutions
Declining Attendance: Initially, sessions had a start with five pairs of participants and their caregivers, indicating interest. However, as the piloting progressed, there was a notable decline in participation, culminating in a final session where only one pair remained, reflecting a concerning trend of decreasing engagement over time.	1. Establish a system for regular check-ins with participants and caregivers prior to each session. 2. Introduce a flexible attendance policy with options for make-up sessions. 3. Set up a reminder and motivational system via phone calls or texts to encourage attendance. 4. Create a support network among participants to foster a sense of community and accountability.
Scheduling Issues: The chosen timing for the sessions—mornings—was intended to coincide with when caregivers were most available. Despite this, unexpected health-related cancellations, frequently cited as due to illness, disrupted the consistency of attendance and challenged the session schedule.	1. Conduct a pre-piloting survey to identify the best times for sessions. 2. Maintain a reserve list of participants willing to join on short notice. 3. Offer alternative dates and times for those who may have to miss scheduled sessions. 4. Implement a clear cancellation policy with guidelines on how to reschedule.

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Challenges	Solutions
Miscommunication: Communication challenges emerged as a significant barrier, with misinformation contributing to participants' absenteeism or reluctance to engage. This confusion likely stemmed from misaligned expectations or unclear messaging regarding the session's activities, purpose, and value.	1. Appoint a dedicated communication officer to manage information dissemination. 2. Develop clear, jargon-free informational materials to be distributed in multiple formats. 3. Implement a confirmation system to verify that communications are received and understood. 4. Schedule brief Q&A sessions before activities for participants to clarify any doubts.
Participant Preferences: Feedback from those who did attend the sessions revealed a preference for a more relaxed atmosphere. Participants favored activities that were less rigidly structured and involved less paperwork, suggesting a need for a more fluid and participant-driven approach to session planning.	1. Use feedback forms post-sessions to gather insights for improvements. 2. Adapt the structure of sessions incrementally based on participant responses. 3. Incorporate leisure and socialization elements into the session to maintain a relaxed atmosphere.

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Challenges	Solutions
Health and Safety Perceptions: In an effort to adhere to health protocols, facilitators donned masks, an action that inadvertently created anxiety among participants. This response highlighted the sensitivity of the target audience to changes in their environment, impacting their willingness to engage fully in the sessions.	1. Hold an orientation session to explain the purpose and necessity of health protocols. 2. Offer demonstrations of safety measures to alleviate fears and misunderstandings. 3. Provide participants with personalized safety equipment to increase comfort. 4. Allow for open discussions where participants can express their health and safety concerns.

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