



Initial policy briefing

DISSEMINATION LEVEL	PUBLIC (PU)
WORK PACKAGE	WP5 DISSEMINATION, CONSOLIDATION AND EXPLOITATION
DELIVERABLE NUMBER	D5.10
VERSION	V2.0
SUBMISSION DATE	30/12/2020
RE-SUBMISSION DATE	04/06/2021
DUE DATE	31/12/2020





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Control sheet

Version history			
Version	Date	Modified by	Summary of changes
V0.1	25/11/2020	Dorleta García	Structure and ToC
V0.2	15/12/2020	Esther Novo	First Draft
V0.3	17/12/2020	Pilar Orero	Added impact and initial review
V0.4	23/12/2020	Esther Novo	Complete version
V1.0	30/12/2020	Esther Novo	Final version ready for submission
V1.1	27/05/2021	Esther Novo	Requests for contributions and modifications based on review report
V1.2	03/06/2021	François Matarasso	Contributions to review comments
V1.3	04/06/2020	Sandra Sousa	Contributions related to the PT trial
V2.0	04/06/2021	Esther Novo	Final version for re-submission

Peer review		
	Reviewer name	Date
Reviewer 1	Pilar Orero	17/12/2020
Reviewer 2	Seán Gaines	30/12/2020

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Executive summary

The aim of TRACTION is to conduct innovative opera co-creation projects with people at risk of social exclusion, that will test and share new ideas. Bridging the social, cultural and technological divides involved may challenge many existing beliefs, structures and habits. The exceptional resources of the TRACTION partnership will help us meet that challenge through mutual support. The immediate outcomes will be new routes for social and economic integration for the people involved, better relationships between opera producers and society, and cutting-edge technological development. But the long-term prize is the definition of new policy frameworks and processes that renew the art's potential to build cohesive societies and imagine a revitalised, common culture in which everyone can feel that they belong.

As part of the TRACTION project, WP5 has the objective of ensuring that project results have a determining impact for opera business, and that they can be extended to other cultural heritage institutions. Moreover, this WP will also target a sustainable and resilient social impact, through defining a new basis for policy and artistic practice that can strengthen the cultural inclusion of marginalised people and so contribute to social justice.

The DoA describes this deliverable as: *“this initial report will provide policy briefing based on the results achieved in the first period M1-M12”*. The deliverable follows the standard template provided by the Commission for this type of report.



1 Introduction

1.1 TRACTION concept and approach

Opera uses all the visual and performing arts to create extraordinary worlds of passion and sensibility. It is rightly recognised as a great achievement of European culture. And yet a form that once inspired social and artistic revolutions is often seen as the staid preserve of the elite. With rising inequality and social exclusion, many see opera—if they think of it at all—as symbolic of what is wrong in Europe today. TRACTION aims to change that using opera as a path for social and cultural inclusion, making it once again a force for radical transformation.

We want to define new forms of artistic creation through which the most marginalised groups (migrants, the rural poor, young offenders and others) can work with artists to tell the stories that matter now. By combining best practice in participatory art with digital technology's innovations of language, form and process, we will define new approaches to co-creation and innovate in three fields: a) Opera creation and production; b) Immersive and interactive digital media; and c) Social integration and community development.

Experimental projects in inner-city Barcelona (ES), a youth prison in Leiria (PT) and rural communities in Ireland (IE) will test and share new ideas. Bridging the social and cultural divides involved will challenge many existing beliefs, structures and habits. The exceptional resources of the TRACTION partnership will help us meet that challenge through mutual support. The immediate outcomes will be new routes for social and economic integration for the people involved, better relationships between opera producers and society, and cutting-edge technological development. But the long-term prize is the definition of new processes that renew the art's potential to build cohesive societies and imagine a revitalised, common culture in which everyone can feel that they belong.

1.2 Purpose of the deliverable

This document will be the initial reflection on the work done during the first year of the project's lifetime in terms of policy recommendations.

1.3 Intended audience

The dissemination level of D5.10 is public. It is aimed for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services); however, anybody can have access to it, and therefore it will be uploaded to the public TRACTION website¹ and to the public repositories used in the project (such as DCU DORAS² and UAB DDD³).

¹ <https://www.traction-project.eu/>

² <http://doras.dcu.ie/>

³ <https://ddd.uab.cat/>



2 Introduction to Policy Briefing

The past 20 years have seen an extraordinary change in the art world as participation has become normalised as a creative strategy and as a public policy goal⁴. In one approach, this may be seen as a stronger and more imaginative commitment to the post-war principle of cultural democratisation. In the world of classical music and opera, that has indeed been the dominant approach, perhaps because of a perceived inflexibility of the art form, or the need to protect it through transmission of existing codes and processes. However, the more radical and transformative approach, termed cultural democracy by some writers⁵ has great potential in the social context of opera⁶.

By connecting – based on a genuine equality founded in human rights – the most marginalised people with the least marginalised form of cultural expression, there is the opportunity to establish new pathways of far-reaching importance. Moving on from the charitable intention that often implicitly underlies many outreach projects, TRACTION aims to strengthen disadvantaged people’s capabilities through access to new educational, social and cultural resources. and enable opera to explore new ways of working that have resonance to a social and technological context far removed from the one in which the art form emerged. Both sides can gain in this process, which is dependent on mutual respect and curiosity. In the end, society at large will gain from the erosion of unjustified and often unquestioned barriers between forms of cultural expression and the revitalisation of the language of music theatre to allow it to articulate new truths in new ways. Social opera is not another effort to make elite culture palatable to those it ignores. It is a radical and innovative attempt to discover new ways of working and new forms of expression that can speak across the divisions in contemporary society.

By working with communities at the risk of exclusion TRACTION pushes existing methodologies to the limit. The choice of cultural heritage (an opera) offers the richest possibilities in the performing arts, but the art form’s reputation as remote and elitist brings further challenges. Combining these ideas with the most innovative practice in participatory art has, to our knowledge, not yet been attempted and will present challenges that will inspire innovative responses, including new formats: shorter, online, interactive. This is especially relevant for the Ireland trial, where target communities are placed in different locations and technology will be the communicative facilitator. The methodologies of dialogue and co-creation will need to be equally innovative: new guidelines towards implementing TRACTION community actions will be provided. Furthermore, TRACTION will explore the learning by training process and its transformative power inside and outside the target communities. The project also aims to understand better users’ motivations and ideas, thus allowing it to explore community interaction, innovation in real time and new opera distribution. Working in a joint concept of diversity along these three communities will be new and challenging.

⁴ Matarasso, F., 2019, *A Restless Art, How participation won and why it matters*, London

⁵ Kelly, O., Lock, J., & Merkel, K., 1986, *Another Standard 86, Culture and Democracy: The Manifesto*, London

⁶ Graves, J., 2005, *Cultural Democracy, The Arts, Community and the Public Purpose*, Chicago



3 Evidence and Analysis

Limited evidence and analysis are available at this stage of the project (M12), but this section will be completed and updated in upcoming versions of the deliverable (M24 and M36). With regards to methods for data collection and analysis, those described for the TRACTION project also apply to the policy recommendations (see WP4 deliverables).

The impact of TRACTION will fall into five main areas:

- a) The social change experienced individually and collectively by the participants,
- b) The institutional change experienced by the creative partners,
- c) The practice change that emerges from the learning and its dissemination,
- d) The policy change produced by a new theory for artistic funding with a social purpose, and
- e) The response and adaptation of a funded project to the COVID-19 reality, as well as the challenges opera companies and artists in general currently face.

At each level, the main research finding will be described in future versions of this document (D5.11 and D5.12), since this change has the potential to be genuinely transformational, but that cannot be taken for granted. A formative approach to evaluation, monitoring outputs and outcomes throughout the course of the project, is one way of keeping the work on track and adjusting as necessary in the light of shared experience. Recognising the legitimacy of all the participants' goals and aspirations is also integral to the project's ethos, so the evaluation must begin by establishing a consistent framework to assess and report on progress towards the whole spectrum of objectives.

The three community opera trials have successfully undertaken research and development activities with civil society actors of different kinds, leading to a period of deepening community dialogue. The response of people outside the opera world has been very positive and encouraging, enabling all three trials to move into co-creation activities at different time between July 2020 and January 2021. These activities, in which Co-Creation Space and Co-Creation Stage (the two principal technology tools) are heavily implicated, are the methodology that will lead to the performance of the new operas. The first performances on 2 and 3 June in Portugal were as successful as could have been hoped, even taking account of the restrictions caused by the pandemic. They achieved TRACTION's central aim of redefining opera as a space for social and technological, and not only artistic innovation, and brought together prison staff, professional musicians and singers, inmates still serving prison sentences, staff of Portugal's largest cultural foundation, members of the local community, researchers from several Portuguese universities and representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Culture. The potential impact on Portuguese policies for inmates will be included in a final version of this policy brief.



4 Concept and Approach

4.1 LICEU community opera trial

The Liceu trial is focused on the Raval neighbourhood of Barcelona, on the edge of which stands the opera house. At the heart of the project is a process of opening up the theatre to its neighbours in ways that are sustainable because they lead to lasting change in how the theatre functions. The co-creation process includes people who are vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion, notably people with disabilities from Sínia occupational centre, people with a migrant background and former sex workers supported by several NGOs, including Dona Kolors, Top Manta and others. These groups are involved in the creation of the poster and the costumes for the opera. Other groups, which include people at risk of exclusion, include the community choirs who will perform in the opera. Around these central groups, the process of community dialogue has involved many others, with a wide range of social backgrounds, since the aim of the project is inclusive.

4.2 SAMP community opera trial

The SAMP trial is centred around the EJP Youth prison in Leiria, working with male inmates aged 16 to 21 or 23, many originally from Brazil or former colonies and, by reason of their incarceration, experiencing severe exclusion. It also involves their relatives and friends, including former inmates, as well as prison staff, some of whom experience levels of disadvantaged that may surprise. The central purpose of the project is to reduce the barriers between the prison and the wider community and create relationships that support future reintegration of ex-offenders into society, reducing recidivism. The community dialogue process, undertaken in the context of security and sanitary concerns, is especially challenging, but this project has developed strongly thanks to the previous work by SAMP in the prison.

4.3 INO community opera trial

INO is working with three communities: Irish speakers living in the Atlantic island of Inis Meáin, teenagers living in the rural centre of Ireland and adults living in Tallaght, on the edge of Dublin. These people are less obviously vulnerable than those in the other trials, since their experience of exclusion is principally concerned with geographical and social isolation, and lack of access to opportunities and services that others take for granted. The pandemic necessitated a fundamental rethink of how to carry out community dialogue with this dispersed groups, and technology has proved to be a highly successful tool not just for connecting people but for the co-creation process too.



5 Policy Implications and Recommendations

Limited recommendation can be concluded at this stage of the project (M12), but this section will be completed and updated in upcoming versions of the deliverable (M24 and M36). The policy recommendations in the future will be supported by research/evidence that will be described in the policy papers to come.

The main results so far have been published in the TRACTION website:

TRACTION quoted as “Born Accessible” in a Policy Paper written for the European Parliament⁷

Doctor Pilar Orero, senior researcher at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and project partner to several European H2020 projects has referred to TRACTION as an example of a “Born Accessible” project in her European Disability Forum endorsed Policy Paper which was due to be presented at the European Parliament as part of Accessibility Day on the 17th of March. The event was cancelled due to COVID-19 and has now been rescheduled for next Autumn.

The Policy Paper identifies and examines EU policies which relate to accessing ICT media content, specifically for broadcast. It comes in response to funding dedicated by the EU to issues regarding research and training for Media Accessibility.

This paper works in the direction of the Digital Single Market and aims at empowering and including every citizen, strengthening the potential of every business and meeting global challenges with our core values. Given the fact that Europe is united in a diversity of cultures, languages and citizens, media accessibility is indeed a powerful vehicle towards achieving an inclusive Digital Europe.

This policy framework aims at setting out measures beyond ‘raising awareness’ to align efforts at a regional, national and European level. In partnership between the private and public sector, the aim is to mobilise resources to achieve an ecosystem of excellence along the entire value chain. It proposes to depart from research and innovation, and to create the right incentives to accelerate the adoption of solutions for integrating accessibility as a prerequisite in all public procurement, including funding, research and innovation ICT calls.

The policy paper can be consulted at the open access UAB digital asses repository here: <https://ddd.uab.cat/record/222130>

⁷ <https://www.traction-project.eu/traction-quoted-as-born-accessible-at-the-european-parliament/>



Cross-fertilisation for Media Co-creation Copyrights Across Three H2020 Funded Projects⁸

The co-creation methodology of media content creation has proven to be a dynamic collective way to generate, re-use and repurpose existing media assets. This collaborative production approach is shared by three H2020 funded projects: TRACTION (870610) SOCLOSE (870939), and MEDIAVERSE (957252).

Much care has been taken with ethical procedures and data protection in all three projects. Special attention has been paid to copyright in MEDIAVERSE, focusing on a theoretical framework for the procedures for copyrights recording and handling. The objective is to enable the translation of legal characteristics and requirements into machine-readable data which is needed for the negotiation and the execution of smart contracts. The copyright for co-creation media assets will also be a forthcoming issue in TRACTION and SOCLOSE, as both are soon to enter their second year in which media production will begin. In preparation for this, an online meeting was held between the three projects to draft user requirements and perform one of the many cross fertilisation activities planned.

TRACTION will provide a bridge between opera professionals and specific communities at risk of exclusion based on trials, understood as experimental attempts, to foster an effective community dialogue between diverse individuals at risk of exclusion in three very different situations across three counties: Ireland, Portugal and Spain.

⁸ <https://www.traction-project.eu/cross-fertilisation-for-media-co-creation-copyrights-across-three-h2020-funded-projects/>



6 Project Identity

The coordinator of the TRACTION project is Dr. Mikel Zorrilla (mzorrilla@vicomtech.org), from Vicomtech⁹, in San Sebastian (Spain).

The funding programme is Horizon 2020, within the Topic DT-TRANSFORMATION-11-2019, with a duration of 3 years (36 months), from January 2019 to December 2022.

The website of the project is www.traction-project.eu, and as well as that, the whole consortium is active in the social media, especially in Twitter, with the username @TRACTION_EU¹⁰.

⁹ www.vicomtech.org

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/TRACTION_EU



7 Conclusions and future work

This document is an initial reflection on the work done during the first year of the project's lifetime in terms of policy recommendations. As per the DoA, there will be an intermediate policy briefing delivered in M24 (D5.11), and a final one by the end of the project (D5.12 in M36).

Besides elaborating on the information already provided in this initial document, the TRACTION consortium will reflect on the actual challenge/urgency and will provide an explanation of how the project will address this challenge and will lead to societal transformation.

In future policy briefings, we will elaborate on how TRACTION will pursue social inclusion in each of the case studies and the methodology and the tools that will be used to reach marginalized groups (see also D3.1 Community dialogue, D4.1 Initial Evaluation methodology definition, D4.3 Co-creation and user training evaluation and all WP6 deliverables on ethics). The TRACTION consortium will also evaluate how to make sure that a digital/technological approach is efficient given that, in general, marginalised groups might not have access to digital tools or do not have the skills to use them. Furthermore, we will investigate how to make sure that cutting-edge technological development will improve social inclusion and integration rather than increasing social exclusion.

Finally, D5.11 and D5.12 will describe how social and economic integration of the people involved will be achieved, how the project will improve the relationship between opera producers and society and how the results and the policy recommendations of the project will lead to some sort of societal transformation.