

# Arts on Prescription Guide

**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



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RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

**Arts on Prescription**



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More Information on AoP

The background of the slide is a traditional marbled paper pattern. It features intricate, swirling veins of dark brown, black, and deep blue, interspersed with lighter, earthy tones of tan and beige. A large, solid orange square is centered on the page, serving as a backdrop for the title text.

# **Introduction to Arts on Prescription**

## Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region

Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region 2023–2025 is an Interreg Baltic Sea Region project co-funded by the European Union.

The partnership consists of thirteen partners from seven countries across the Baltic Sea Region: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Germany.

The project partnership have developed an Arts on Prescription generic concept programme, an online Arts on Prescription guide and an evaluation framework for the Arts on Prescription programme.

You can find more information about the Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region on the projects website by scanning the QR code.

This Pixi book will introduce you briefly to the AoP guide's different themes and chapters found in the online Arts on Prescription guide. All pages have a QR code which gives you direct access to the online chapter.



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## Arts on Prescription Guide

The **Arts on Prescription (AoP)** guide is a comprehensive online guide for public authorities and practitioners in public health and culture.

The online AoP guide is developed by Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region project partnership, to provide you with the necessary background information, tools, best practices, and information on how to plan, implement, evaluate, and invest in AoP programmes.

Information in the guide is based on a generic AoP concept programme developed within the project “Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region” (2023–2025). The generic AoP concept programme can be adapted and tailored to your local context. The guide provides examples of how the generic concept was adapted to meet the context of the pilot partners programmes in the Baltic Sea Region.



## What is Arts on Prescription?

Arts on prescription (AoP) is a community-based health intervention where individuals are prescribed arts activities to improve their mental health and wellbeing. These activities can include visual arts, music, dance, writing, and other creative practices.

AoP is a non-therapy approach offering group-based culture and arts activities for individuals with, or at risk of developing, mental health issues. AoP is tailored to the target audience's and the community's needs, to improve mental health and wellbeing in communities.

AoP is based on the concept that engaging in creative activities can have a positive effect on mental health. Through creative processes and social connections, AoP enhances mental health and social belonging to individuals with mild to moderate mental health issues. AoP is gaining recognition as an alternative and/or complement to conventional mental health therapy.



The background of the slide is a detailed, high-magnification microscopic image of plant tissue. It shows various cellular structures, including elongated green cells with prominent chloroplasts, some containing yellowish-orange granules. The overall texture is complex and organic, with different shades of green and yellow. A solid green rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the title text in white.

# **Organisational Framework & Cross-Sectoral Collaboration**



## Establishing Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

Cross-sectoral collaboration in municipal or regional organisations is vital for establishing the organisational framework for your AoP programme. AoP programmes involve stakeholders from various sectors such as health, culture, social services, youth, and elderly care. The involvement of these diverse sectors depends on local policies that AoP programmes can support, as well as the selected target audience for your AoP programme.

It is fundamental when implementing pilot programmes, to create synergies, pool resources, and develop a shared understanding of the programme's benefits across all involved sectors. A systems thinking approach is necessary for successful cross-sectoral collaboration. Although challenging, it recognises and bridges the diverse perspectives and approaches from all sectors, and fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, where all sectors are equally important in the success of the AoP programme.

Additionally, cross-sectoral collaboration can help discover and secure funding opportunities for long-term AoP programmes.



## Setting Up the Organisational Framework

The AoP organisational framework is fundamental to the success of your AoP programme. Consider the structure and resources required to determine costs during the funding process. Once funding is secured, establishing the organisational framework is a priority.

The framework should involve key stakeholders with political insight, decision-making authority, and key employees to oversee daily management. This ensures tasks, milestones, deliverables, and reporting are completed within the designated time-frame and budget.

When setting up the framework, align the goals and objectives of the AoP programmes with existing policies and strategies in your local region or municipality. Also, consider how AoP programmes align with future policy areas and funding prospects. The organisational framework is essential when piloting and integrating AoP programmes into local communities.



## Applying the Organisational Framework

The aim of AoP's organisational framework is to secure leadership and the necessary expertise, skills, and cross-sectoral collaboration in the planning and implementing of your local AoP programme.

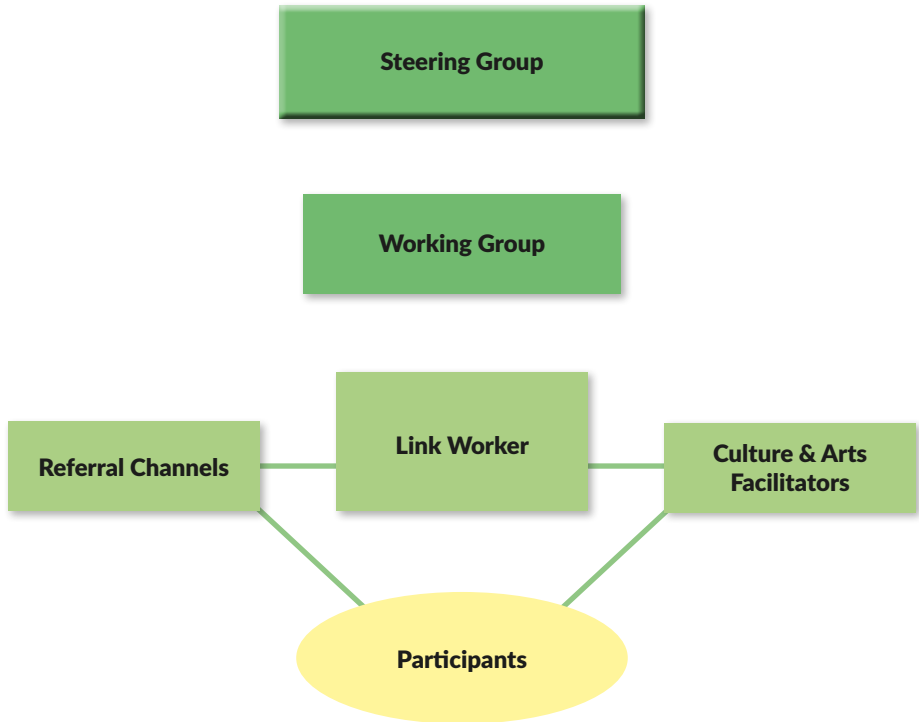
The organisational framework should always consist of a steering group, involving key stakeholders with political insight and decision-making authority. This group will oversee the allocation of resources and financing, to ensure the programme remains within budget and achieves its objectives.

It is also recommended to include a multidisciplinary working group, consisting of professionals from various sectors e.g. health, culture, social, and education. This group can provide invaluable resources and expertise to implement and monitor the day-to-day running of the AoP programme.

Alternatively, these two groups can be combined into one, consisting of individuals with decision-making authority and those with planning and implementation skills.



## Example of the Organisational Framework



## **Monitoring the Organisational Framework**

The programme's organisational framework should regularly be monitored and evaluated to determine the AoP programme's ongoing progress and outcomes.

Consistently monitoring the work of the programme's organisational framework enables prompt attention to overcome challenges and to make necessary decisions and changes, to ensure the AoP programme achieves its goals, objectives and expected outcomes.

Monitoring the organisational framework may result in the need to revise the programme's organisational framework model. Ensure the adjusted organisational framework supports the AoP programme's outcomes and includes representative members, who align with the municipality or regional policies and strategies.



The background of the slide is a piece of marbled paper with a complex, organic pattern of swirling colors including yellow, black, blue, and green. In the center of the slide is a solid orange square. Overlaid on this square is the text 'Developing the AoP Programme' in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

# **Developing the AoP Programme**

## Planning and Preparing the AoP Programme

Developing the content for the AoP programme does not necessarily have to start from the ground-up, requiring new personal resources and skillsets.

Local cultural institutions have experienced culture and arts facilitators who can effectively develop and lead activities for AoP programmes. These facilitators bring a wealth of expertise and skills, ensuring high-quality and engaging content.

Moreover, local communities have cultural institutions have personnel who possess both professional and personal skills, making them ideal candidates to serve as culture and arts facilitators. By leveraging these existing resources, the AoP programme can benefit from diverse perspectives and talents, fostering a vibrant and inclusive environment for participants. This approach not only saves time and resources but also strengthens community ties and promotes local culture and arts initiatives.



## Ensuring the Skills of the Facilitators

Culture and arts facilitators play a central role in the implementation of AoP programmes as culture and arts are the essences of the programmes. It is important that the culture and arts facilitators are motivated and skilled in adapting activities to the target audience needs.

The link worker's task is to identify culture and arts facilitators with relevant expertise or interest in working with the target audience and introduce them to the AoP programme concept. Engaging facilitators may involve reaching out to the cultural sector, cultural institutions, cultural networks, or NGO's.

Facilitators should have expertise in one or more of the following: art, music, theatre, or literature and be able to engage individuals with mental health issues, and who may have little or no prior experience of culture and arts.

Activities should be suitable and sensitive to participants' needs. It is essential that facilitators and the target audience feel comfortable with each other. Facilitators, alongside link workers, should create a safe and inclusive environment for all participants.





## Select the Target Audience

AoP programmes are for individuals with mild to moderate mental health issues, who may be seeking a non-clinical mental health approach or a supplement to conventional mental health treatment and therapy.

AoP is not suitable for everyone. Criteria for the AoP target audience should be discussed and agreed upon before planning the programme. AoP programmes should be designed to meet the needs of your specific target audience. This will help you determine the length of your programme and choose the appropriate activities. It is important to speak with individuals about their expectations for the programme and inform them in more detail about the programme's concept and content.

The target audience can include the elderly, adults, and youths. It can be for individuals with stress, anxiety, depression, who are socially isolated or have an underlying illness such as heart disease or cancer, or those who have experienced a life-crisis.



## Planning the Structure of the AoP Programme

The structure and planning of the programme's activities will be based on the need of the target audience. When planning the structure of the programme and the activities, it is important to determine the duration of the programme, frequency and length of each activity and the culture genre to be included in the AoP programme.

Culture and arts activities may already exist in the community and can be adapted to the needs of target audience, so engaging facilitators with existing activities can be beneficial. Utilizing local creative opportunities can foster a sense of community belonging among participants and promote sustainable use and exchange of local resources.

The AoP in the Baltic Sea Region generic AoP programme concept can be adapted to local contexts and can provide useful information in how to structure AoP programme and activities.



## Facilitating the Activities

Facilitating AoP activities involves collaboration between the link worker and culture and arts facilitators. The link worker attends all meetings, providing support and structure, while the culture and arts facilitators lead and guide the participants in the artistic activities.

Creating a supportive environment and safe space for participants is essential for the programme's success and effectiveness. Both link workers and facilitators should prepare in advance and clearly understand their roles before, during and after the activities. This preparation ensures that they can effectively guide and support participants during the activities, fostering engagement and positive outcomes.

By working together, the link worker and the culture and arts facilitator can create a cohesive and nurturing atmosphere that encourages participants to explore and benefit from the artistic experiences offered by AoP.



## Ensuring Sustainability of Activities after AoP

To ensure sustainability, participants should have opportunities to continue engaging in culture and art and/or social activities beyond the AoP programme. In the last 2-3 weeks of the AoP programme, the link worker should discuss with the participants their perspectives for continuing in culture and arts activities and/or continuing their fellowship after the programme. This encourages integrating the arts into their daily life, strengthening social networks, and sustaining the positive effects of the AoP programme.

Measures to support sustainability include providing locations for ongoing self-organised meetings, allowing participants to maintain social contact. Referring participants to municipality or regional self-help groups can also be beneficial. Inviting representatives from social and cultural organisations to introduce their offers during the AoP programme, can help participants continue their engagement. This could include internships or volunteer work in art and cultural institutions. Additionally, the link worker can provide an overview of upcoming culture and arts events.



## Ethical and Legal Guidelines

When implementing Arts on Prescription, it is important to consider that the work between culture and health requires that the ethical and moral codes of both sectors are respected.

Ethical considerations should be integrated into the development process of any AoP programme, taking into account the local context and target audience. This ensures that the programme is not only effective but also respectful and inclusive. Examples of ethical and moral considerations are confidentiality, non-religious activities, voluntary participation, substance-free environment, maintaining boundaries, and working with vulnerable groups.

These categories are not exhaustive but serve as a starting point for ensuring that AoP programmes are developed and implemented with a strong ethical foundation. By addressing these considerations, we can create programmes that are both beneficial and respectful to all participants involved.



The background of the slide is a complex marbled paper pattern. It features swirling, organic shapes in various shades of teal, dark blue, and black, with some lighter, almost white, areas. The pattern is dense and intricate. Overlaid on this background is a large, solid blue square that occupies the central portion of the image. Inside this square, the word "Evaluation" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, centered both horizontally and vertically.

# Evaluation

## Why Evaluate Your AoP Programme?

Evaluating Arts on Prescription (AoP) programmes are essential for understanding their impact and improving their effectiveness. Gathering feedback from participants, link workers, and facilitators can identify what is working well and what needs improvement. This process helps to refine the programme, ensuring it meets the needs of the target audience more effectively.

Moreover, evaluation demonstrates the value of AoP programmes to decision-makers, funding agencies, and the wider community. It provides evidence of the programme's benefits, which is essential for securing continued support and resources. A well-planned evaluation allows for informed decision-making and maximising the potential of AoP initiatives.

By continuously assessing and adapting the programme, we can ensure it remains relevant, effective, and beneficial for all involved.



## Designing Your Evaluation

When planning an AoP programme, it is essential to understand the distinctions between feedback, evaluation, and research, as each serves different purposes in assessing and improving programmes.

Feedback provides immediate information about activities and facilitators, helping to refine and adapt the programme. It is often specific, timely, and actionable, focusing on improving future implementation.

Evaluation, on the other hand, is a systematic process aimed at determining the value or effectiveness of a programme against predefined criteria. It often incorporates both formative and summative assessments.

Research delves deeper into understanding broader concepts or testing hypotheses, employing rigorous data collection and analysis to uncover new insights or solve complex problems. Understanding these distinctions helps clarify the roles of diverse approaches in shaping effective AoP programmes.





## Planning and Monitoring Your Evaluation

Effective evaluation planning ensures a systematic approach, enhancing the reliability of results. It involves collecting data that accurately reflects the programme's impact and maintains consistency across various groups or settings. Well-designed surveys and standardised methods are crucial for making findings trustworthy and comprehensible.

Planning and monitoring involve creating a timeline, preparing data collection methods, tracking progress, and addressing ethical considerations. This structured approach ensures that the evaluation is thorough and credible, providing clear insights into AoP programme's effectiveness and areas for improvement. By meticulously planning and continuously monitoring, stakeholders can trust the evaluation process and apply the results to make informed decisions, drive success and to scale-up AoP programmes.



## Analysing and Communicating Results

Analysing and communicating evaluation results effectively is key in demonstrating the success of AoP programmes and identifying areas for improvement. This involves carefully examining data to identify patterns and trends, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Presenting findings in clear and accessible formats, such as graphs and narratives, ensures that all stakeholders, from participants to the different sectors, and funding agencies, can easily understand the results.

Tailoring the communication to different audiences helps address their specific interests and levels of understanding. Engaging stakeholders throughout the process and establishing feedback mechanisms ensures that their insights are incorporated, making the evaluation more relevant and actionable. Evaluation results can potentially and effectively display AoP's value, foster transparency, and drive continuous improvements based on evidence, highlighting both successes and areas to be improved.



# The Arts on Prescription in the Baltic Sea Region Evaluation Framework

## Evaluation of the intended and non-Intended effects on mental health and wellbeing

Qualitative part of the evaluation examines the experienced changes in mental and social wellbeing for the participants. It also focuses on investigating how and why AoP works for the participants.

Quantitative part of the evaluation consists of an evaluation of the effect of the programme in terms of alleviating mental disorder symptoms and enhancing mental wellbeing.

## Process evaluation

Process evaluation addresses the question of how successful the implementation of the programme was and how well the set-up worked.

## Economic evaluation

The economic evaluation consists of a cost-benefit analysis based on the costs of the project compared to the overall effectiveness of it, as well as a calculation of the social value of the AoP project.

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# Funding

## Securing Funding

To secure funding for your AoP programme, it is important to convince decision makers of the financial gain of AoP programmes in the form of health, social and/or economic returns on investment. Equally important is commitment from all sectors involved to establish a cross-sectoral funding model, which can effectively implement sustainable AoP programmes.

To persuade decision-makers to invest in AoP programmes, it is crucial to convey the estimated and/or documented economic impact of AoP in terms of its potential return on investment (ROI) and social return on investment (SROI), as well as its role as a preventative initiative.

Securing funding will involve mapping funding prospects, to gain an overview of municipal and regional funding opportunities, as well as public and private funding with a focus on health and culture. Additionally, explore existing and new financial possibilities, such as a cross-sectoral financing model, for either pilot or long-term AoP programmes.



## Funding Costs

When applying for funding, municipalities or regions should always estimate the anticipated costs of setting-up and implementing an AoP programme. Estimated costs should include costs relating to the planning, development, and implementation phases of short-term (pilot) and/or long-term (established) AoP programmes.

It is advisable to secure funding for a pilot programme initially, to assess the feasibility of AoP in your area. Costs will depend on the programme's structure, including the number of yearly cycles, duration, and type and frequency of activities.

Note that piloting a programmes incur higher initial costs due to employing or building on resources, innovation and development processes, and testing expenses. However, knowledge gained from pilot programmes are valuable to estimate costs for longer-term implementation.



## **Examples of Sustainable Financial Models**

Aalborg Municipality in Denmark have been running the Arts of Prescription Programme: Kulturvitaminer (Culture Vitamins) since 2016. The health administration in the municipality finances the full-time employment (37 hour weekly) of a permanent link worker. The culture and arts facilitators and activities are financed through the operational agreements between the municipality's culture and leisure administration and the cultural institutions

Jönköping County in Sweden, Arts on Prescription programme - KUR, has successfully received long-term funding since 2017. This programme is partly being financed by the region and partly by the municipalities involved. The shared co-financing is paying the link worker's salary and the arts activities.



# Resources



## Resources

Resources provides further guidance on implementing arts and health projects. From planning, check-lists, and facilitation tips to best practices and case studies, this section is your go-to for in-depth insights in the field of culture and health.

Here you will find a glossary of terms which provides clear definitions of key terms used throughout the guide, ensuring a solid understanding of the concepts and terminology.

Explore a curated collection of literature that delves into the practice of prescribing arts activities as a form of health intervention. This section includes further practical information, academic papers, reports, and studies that provide evidence-based insights and highlights the impact of arts and health.

You will find a full description of each pilot programme in the guide's resources section.



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**Find a Mentor**

## Find a Mentor

Find a Mentor connects you with a broader community of practice through a directory of specialists in the discipline of Arts on Prescription. The directory is designed to be a valuable resource to help you successfully set up and manage your culture and health projects, by providing access to professionals with extensive expertise.

The specialists can assist you in areas such as community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, public health, policy recommendations, health literacy, creative facilitation, and cultural & health interventions.

To contact these specialists, browse the list and reach out to those whose skills and experience align with your project goals. Whether you need advice on planning, implementation, or evaluation, you will find an expert with the ability and knowledge to mentor you in Arts on Prescription programmes and concept.

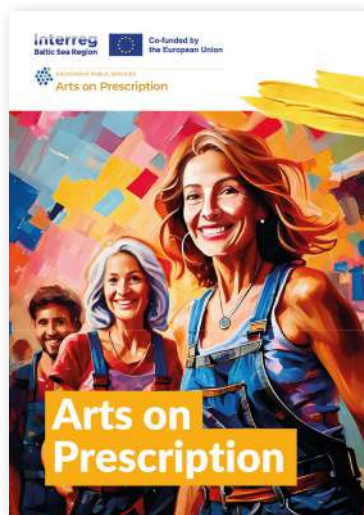


## More information about AoP

See the film Arts on Prescription developed by the project partnership.



Read about AoP in the Baltic Sea Region in our brochure.





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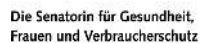


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## Arts on Prescription



Co-funded by the European Union (ERDF), this #MadeWithInterreg project helps to improve the mental well-being of citizens in the Baltic Sea Region.

