MEMORABLE

NATIONAL REPORT
GERMANY

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This report presents the findings of desk research and interviews conducted in Germany within the Erasmus+ project Memorable (cooperation partnership in adult education, project number: 2024-1-BG01-KA220-ADU-000245828). More information is available at https://memorable-project.eu/.

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"I think this is an absolutely exciting and important project to enable people living with dementia to participate more fully in cultural and artistic activities. Appropriate educational programmes and materials are essential for designing suitable activities and accompanying them."

(Petra Bröhl, Sozialverband VdK Hessen-Thüringen, "Kulturcafés Miteinander für Menschen mit Demenz" about the project Memorable)

1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Project context

This report presents the findings of desk research and interviews conducted in Germany as part of the **Memorable Project**. The Memorable project is an Erasmus+ initiative that aims to promote a dementia-friendly society by training volunteers, (in)formal carers, artists and cultural stakeholders to make cultural institutions more accommodating for people living with dementia. The project will develop educational materials to raise awareness and provide skills for creating dementia-friendly cultural spaces.

The research portrayed in this report assesses the landscape of dementia-friendly cultural practices, identifying existing initiatives, and analysing the educational needs of people living with dementia, their family members, cultural workers, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

Lessons learned from local and regional projects, as well as training efforts in the field, are provided as a valuable knowledge base. Additionally, the expertise of a diverse range of stakeholders - including people living with dementia, their families, healthcare providers, staff from cultural institutions, trainers, and facilitators with experience in dementia-friendly practices - offers deeper insights into key issues surrounding cultural inclusion.

The research phase focused on four key objectives:

1. Facilitating the creation of comprehensive learning resources by identifying educational needs.
2. Enhancing understanding of the dementia-friendly cultural landscape and its supporting structures.
3. Promoting cross-border knowledge exchange by sharing existing practices and experiences.
4. Identifying effective practices that can serve as models for future initiatives.

The study examined local and regional initiatives that promote inclusive cultural engagement and identified exemplary dementia-friendly cultural practices tailored for people living with dementia and their families. Practitioners, experts, and potential learners were actively involved throughout the process to ensure the subsequent development of learning modules would be both relevant and effective.

The findings, based on first-hand data and expert insights, provide a nuanced understanding of the learning needs, challenges, and best practices related to the cultural inclusion of people living with dementia and their carers. These insights will contribute to the development of educational materials, including a **European Compendium**, aimed at raising awareness and supporting the expansion of dementia-friendly cultural practices.

1.2 Methodological approach

The research activities for the Memorable Project followed a mix-methods methodological approach, combining desk research and stakeholder interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of dementia-friendly cultural practices. This approach ensured a thorough analysis of existing initiatives, educational needs, and best practices across partner countries.

The desk research phase involved a comprehensive literature review to gather and analyse existing knowledge, reports, and studies related to dementia-friendly cultural practices. The key focus areas included:

- **Public Discourse**: Examination of current discussions on dementia-friendly cultural engagement.
- **Access Challenges**: Identification of barriers faced by people living with dementia and their carers when engaging with cultural institutions.
- **Best Practices**: Review of case studies showcasing successful dementia-friendly programmes.
- **Educational Needs**: Assessment of learning requirements for stakeholders, including carers and cultural institution staff.
- **Training Materials**: Analysis of existing educational resources on dementia awareness and cultural inclusion.
- **Policy Landscape**: Evaluation of national and regional policies supporting cultural participation for individuals with dementia.
- **Support Structures**: Overview of available services and frameworks for fostering dementia-friendly cultural spaces.
- **Recent Initiatives**: Identification of projects promoting inclusivity in the cultural sector.
- **Training Programmes**: Exploration of current training opportunities for volunteers, carers, and cultural workers on dementia-friendly practices.

Data was sourced from academic and policy databases, government reports, organisational publications, and relevant cultural sector materials to ensure a well-rounded analysis.

To complement the desk research, semi-structured and narrative **interviews were conducted** with key stakeholders (including one interviewee from Austria), including:

- 4 informal carers
- 4 experts and practitioners in cultural inclusion of people living with dementia

A total of four family carers and four experts were interviewed in Germany (and Austria), with two individuals fulfilling both roles. One interview was conducted face-to-face at a carer's home, one by telephone, one in writing, and the remaining interviews via video call (Zoom).

The experts (three women, one man) were all involved in designing cultural activities and events, and some were also responsible for developing training programmes for facilitators:

- One interviewee, who led a project in the amateur music sector, supported numerous dementia-friendly cultural initiatives and developed her own concert series alongside training sessions for family carers.
- Dr Ann-Katrin Adams from the Hessian Alzheimer's Society and the Bürgerinstitut in Frankfurt am Main is an expert in dementia-friendly art education and leads the working group on dementia at the Bürgerinstitut. Together with her team, she regularly organises guided tours for people with dementia and their relatives in eight cultural institutions (mainly museums), delivered by specially trained facilitators.
- Torsten Anstädt leads the digital cultural programme 'Die Gute Stunde', which offers a wide variety of activities. Within this framework, he has developed special offerings for people with dementia, which are held monthly.
- Susanne Schmidt-Neubauer is a life and social counsellor for family carers of people with dementia. She founded the first support group in Austria for relatives of people with young-onset dementia and, as an artist, leads art workshops for individuals living with dementia.

Among the family carers (three women, one man), none were providing care at home. Instead, their relatives were in advanced stages of dementia and living in residential facilities or shared dementia care homes. In one case, the person with dementia had already passed away.

Despite outreach through several Alzheimer's societies and local contact points, almost all interviews were arranged through personal connections. It is likely that family carers are managing significant responsibilities, making it difficult to take on additional commitments, even within their own home. According to our knowledge from previous project we assume that carers of individuals with mild to moderate dementia are rarely connected to local support services, as they tend to seek help only once they are no longer able to cope without it – usually when the dementia has progressed significantly. This makes this group difficult to reach – a factor that should be considered when promoting cultural offerings.

For this reason, it was not possible to include individuals living with mild or moderate dementia in the interviews.

The combined methodology ensures a nuanced understanding of the landscape, challenges, and best practices in dementia-friendly cultural participation, providing a strong foundation for the development of educational resources and the broader objectives of the Memorable Project.

2 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PHASE

2.1 The role of cultural spaces in enhancing well-being

"Taking part in cultural activities is better than taking medication. It is more stimulating and improves the quality of life for both the person affected and their carers."

(Informal carer of his wife)

"He still has his people [in the choir]. He is delighted. (…) It was obvious that morning: from the moment he joined the choir, my husband was beaming. It was so beautiful."

(Informal carer of her husband)

At the end of 2023, 1.8 million people – around 2 percent of the population –have been associated with dementia in Germany. Of these, around 1.7 million were 65 years old or older. This corresponds to around 9 per cent of people in this age group. 445,000 people have been newly diagnosed in 2023 alone. As a consequence of demographic change, the number of people affected continues to rise. If there is no breakthrough in prevention or treatment, current estimates suggest that up to 2.7 million people aged 65+ could be living with dementia in Germany by 2050. Interestingly, the prevalence of dementia underline, a close relationship not only to age (which does not mean that dementia is a normal part of ageing), but also to gender. While almost 1.2 million women were affected, the figure for men was only around 0.6 million (Deutsche Alzheimer Gesellschaft 2024).

These figures already indicate the extent of their social impact on people living with dementia. Despite the condition, they still have a high capacity for emotional, physical and sensory experiences and need opportunities for new experiences. As their own initiative often diminishes, external support remains important (Kompetenzzentrum Demenz 2022). At the same time, it can be observed that people often adopt an avoidant attitude when dealing with people living with dementia unless they are directly affected themselves, for example by the condition of a family member (Spree 2013).

People living with dementia usually face serious problems quite quickly: Not only are their opportunities to carry out activities that are familiar and relevant to them severely restricted, but they also fall out of social contexts. A process of disenfranchisement also sets in, with more and more people taking over decisions for them. Their ability to participate in society (including culture)[1] is therefore gradually diminishing (BMFSFJ 2020)[2]. According to the 2022 *Time Use Survey*, compared to younger age groups, people aged 65 and over spent the most time consuming culture and carrying out cultural activities, at just under 31 hours a week (including

[1] "Participation encompasses all relevant areas of life and society and is therefore social, cultural, economic, educational and political participation" (BMFSFJ 2020: 6).

[2] In its report, the *Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth* (BMFSFJ 2020) explicitly states that social participation and its opportunities, which to a significant extent determine the level of quality of life experienced, is a right to which all people are entitled.

television, streaming and video on demand) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2022). Examining the various activities in more detail (see the table below), it is reasonable to assume that spending more time on meaningful activities, being included in social communities, and being encouraged to participate in culture would benefit all age groups.

	total	Age from … to less than … years					
		10 – 12	12 – 18	18 – 25	25 – 45	45 – 65	65 und älter
	in hours per week						
Attending cultural events/visiting cultural institutions*	01:52	(01:53)	02:24	02:56	02:02	01:37	01:35
Artistic activities	00:23	00:58	00:50	00:30	00:16	00:17	00:27
Reading**	03:07	03:03	01:47	01:09	01:43	02:55	06:04
Watching television, streaming, video on demand	14:56	08:36	10:06	11:10	12:10	15:37	20:17
Listening to the radio or music	00:46	01:29	01:28	01:04	00:36	00:39	00:49
Playing computer games	02:12	06:23	08:27	05:30	02:31	00:53	00:42
Playing board games	00:47	04:36	01:18	00:36	00:37	00:33	00:54
Total	**24:06**	**25:06**	**26:24**	**22:58**	**19:58**	**22:34**	**30:51**
Total excluding television, streaming, video on demand	09:10	16:30	16:18	11:47	07:47	06:56	10:33

* including: going to the cinema, theatre, concerts, musicals, art exhibitions, museums, libraries, excursions.
** including: newspapers, magazines, books (including digital), reading aloud to children.

Source: Zeitverwendungserhebung, Statistisches Bundesamt 2022 (own translation), persons 10 years and older.

Table 1 Time spent on culture and cultural activities by age group in 2022

The fact that there is no specific data on the cultural participation of people living with dementia in the study already hints at the problem of severe exclusion of people living with dementia at least in terms of data collection and analysis. There is therefore a need for inclusive programmes and opportunities for participation. However, participation does not only mean being a recipient, but also being actively involved in something.[3] Hence, the BMFSJ differentiates between the cultural participation of people living with dementia in three possible groups: (1) Cultural programmes **on the subject** of dementia, (2) cultural programmes **for** people living with dementia and (3) cultural programmes **with and/or by** people living with dementia (BMFSFJ 2020).

The potential of cultural participation lies in the fact that cultural and creative activities also enable non-verbal communication between their participants. Especially as the language skills of dementia patients often change. There is also potential if the person had no contact or affinity with artistic and cultural activities before their condition. New experiences offer the opportunity

[3] Real participation should be closely linked to decision-making power and competence as well as independent forms of organisation.

to learn new forms of expression and develop artistic self-confidence and self-assurance. Cultural participation, understood as participatory involvement, therefore also means that people living with dementia can make a real contribution to society (BMFSFJ 2020).

Concerts specifically aimed at people living with dementia, for example, remain as limited forms of participation. **Inclusive formats** could remedy this limitation because they are not only aimed at an audience of people living with dementia or interested parties, but were actively conceived, designed and made possible by these people. These inclusive formats could either be newly developed or existing structures could be expanded and opened up to people living with dementia. Participatory involvement also means that the cultural offerings are not only aimed at citizens who are only interested in culture, but that the affected environment of people living with dementia, i.e. their everyday life and people with family and professional commitments, is also integrated and equally represented in a "participatory" way. Social (and cultural) participation can therefore only take place if it means working together in practice, which in turn promotes the perception of competence rather than deficits on the part of affected. Cultural activities that focus on their concerns and perspectives are particularly suitable as a social learning field (BMFSFJ 2020).

While the general benefits of cultural participation for people living with dementia are well documented in the academic literature, our interviews offered valuable insight into more personal experiences - shared both by family carers and by those developing and implementing cultural programmes.

The experts interviewed emphasised the importance of inclusion and the broader opening of cultural institutions to diverse audiences. However, most of the initiatives and programmes discussed were specifically designed for people living with dementia and their family members, which appears entirely appropriate when considering the need for targeted and meaningful engagement.

The experts interviewed shared numerous practical examples, ranging from museum visits to multisensory art and music experiences. Key highlights include:

- Museum and Garden Tours: Collaborations with eight cultural institutions - including museums and the Palmengarten [botanical garden] - enable 1–2 tailored guided tours per year. These are supported by preparatory training sessions for museum educators to sensitise them to the needs of people living with dementia. The tour in the Palmengarten was described as a highly effective approach led by a special needs educator involves engaging multiple senses - including touch and taste - to foster interaction and inclusion.

  Some guided tours are followed by hands-on creative workshops. For example, at the Museum of Modern Art, only two artworks were discussed in a calm setting, followed by a clay mask-making session in a tactile environment involving both people living with dementia and their carers.

- A specially designed concert series includes not only musical performances for people living with dementia but also parallel training sessions for carers, for example on fall prevention.

- Relaxed Theatre Performances include simplified productions with reduced complexity and duration, no strict behavioural expectations, and a welcoming atmosphere for diverse responses.

- Online Format “Die Gute Stunde”, developed by HumaQ, this programme offers interactive cultural sessions in a virtual setting, including prior work with people living with dementia.
- One respondent developed the concept “Enjoying with All Senses”. It features small-group social gatherings with shared meals and drinks, followed by painting sessions where participants express their experiences on canvas and take their artwork home. The format was intentionally designed to offer a safe, time-limited environment with a tangible outcome.

The carers predominantly engaged in inclusive activities. Two of the four carers interviewed stated that they did not (or did not used to) visit cultural institutions with their relatives in need of care. The other two pursued frequent and varied activities. Over time, the types of activities have often been adapted to match the changing needs and abilities of their loved ones. Theatre, Museums, Cinema, and Concerts: These were previously possible but are now usually limited to quiet and shorter events.

Music plays a vital role in many carers' lives and those of their relatives. It was used both as an emotional companion and a form of activation and connection. One carer recalled making music with their mother during her final, bedridden phase, choosing songs based on her personal interests. Another described how she had twice managed to take her husband to the opera, and how he has been a long-time member of a church choir that recently started a dementia-friendly group for older people. This adapted choir - supported by volunteers - offers a supportive, inclusive environment where everyone helps each other, and performances are part of community services, fostering social inclusion without explicitly targeting people living with dementia. One of the interviewees highlighted the Caritas Salzburg initiative "Musik hören – Musik fühlen" [Listening to Music – Feeling Music] as a particularly effective offering.

The interviews clearly highlight the powerful and positive impact that cultural participation can have on the wellbeing of people living with dementia - as well as on their carers.

One carer described cultural activities as "better than any medication", emphasising that they are more stimulating and uplifting than pharmaceutical interventions. These experiences were seen as significantly enhancing the quality of life for both the person living with dementia and the informal carers.

A deeply moving example came from a woman whose husband had recently moved into a care home. Despite the change, she continues to attend choir sessions with him. She shared, with visible joy, how much this weekly activity means to her husband - how happy it makes him, even if he can no longer sing all the songs. The choir gives him a sense of belonging, something she described as feeling "like family". She also highlighted the importance of music in her husband's life, observing how his expression brightens as soon as he arrives at the choir. Although she admitted that it's difficult to assess the exact impact of other activities, the emotional response to music was unmistakable.

Another interviewee reflected on how engaging with art allows people living with dementia to connect - whether by recognising something of themselves in a story, enjoying the colours and shapes of a painting, or simply being part of a shared experience. The act of being included was seen as a vital component of wellbeing.

Concerts were also mentioned as having a clear and observable effect. One carer noted the visible change in facial expressions before and after such events - providing a simple but powerful indication of joy and emotional engagement.

Overall, as the literature states (see above), the testimonies point to arts and culture as essential, non-pharmacological pathways to emotional connection, self-expression, and social inclusion for people living with dementia.

2.2 Current state of dementia-friendly cultural institutions in Germany

In Germany, a multi-level policy framework supports the promotion of cultural participation among people living with dementia, integrating national strategies, regional initiatives and civil society engagement. At the heart of these efforts lies the National Dementia Strategy, adopted in 2020 and comprising over 160 measures aimed at enhancing the quality of life for individuals living with dementia by 2026.[4] These measures explicitly include the promotion of their social and cultural participation. The strategy aims to improve the living situation of people living with dementia and their relatives in Germany encourages collaboration between cultural institutions, care organisations, and local communities, focusing on accessibility, staff training, and creating dementia-friendly environments.

At the federal state level, the promotion of cultural participation has played a rather minor role in the regional dementia strategies of the German federal states to date. Among specific political strategies at the regional level that promote cultural participation for people living with dementia, particularly noteworthy are the current development of a dementia strategy with a cultural focus in Saxony-Anhalt, coordinated by Landeskompetenzzentrum Demenz Sachsen-Anhalt [the Saxony-Anhalt State Competence Centre for Dementia] (based at the Institute for Health and Nursing Sciences at the Medical Faculty of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg) and a conference on the cultural participation of people living with dementia organised by the centre in September 2024.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, the „Demenz und Kulturelle Teilhabe“ [Dementia and Cultural Participation] network has been launched. This network is a collaboration between the Regional Office for Ageing, Care and Dementia in North Rhine-Westphalia and the “Kompetenzzentrum für Kulturelle Bildung im Alter und inclusive Kultur (kubia)” [Competence Centre for Cultural Education in Old Age and Inclusive Culture]. The aim is to connect cultural and care providers and promote dementia-friendly cultural activities. Among other things, the network offers ideas for low-threshold cultural activities with people living with dementia. It further provides information and materials on the subject of cultural participation for people living with dementia. Cultural impulses are also intended for the care of people living with dementia in place or in long-term care facilities.

[4] More information in German language can be found here: https://www.wegweiser-demenz.de/wwd/aktiv-werden/nationale-demenzstrategie/soziales-und-kulturelles-leben--180020

Local strategies in Germany are frequently implemented through funding programmes and regional networks that foster collaboration between the cultural and health sectors. Local authorities and non-profit organisations play a central role in bringing these strategies to life by initiating inclusive cultural projects in museums, theatres, and music institutions. This grassroots engagement is further supported by cross-sectoral cooperation and a growing body of practical guidelines aimed at helping cultural professionals adapt their offerings to the needs of people living with dementia.

Public cultural institutions, in particular, are recognised as key spaces for enabling social participation. The accessibility and diversity of cultural activities for people with dementia are illustrated by the wide range of museum programmes and music initiatives across the country. Beyond these, numerous other cultural projects aim to actively involve people living with dementia, fostering their integration into the cultural life of society and supporting a broader vision of inclusive cultural citizenship.

2.2.1 Museums

Museums are considered to be predestined places for participatory participation because they provide an environment for mutual encounters and exchange, are public spaces and often offer discounted admission for certain groups. With around 6,800 museums in Germany, there is a good availability also in many peripheral areas. Many museums see themselves as inclusive institutions for all people in Germany, since the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* has given them special support since it came into force in 2009: This is because museums and other cultural institutions of the UN Convention in Article 30 (2) are explicitly named as places of participation (BMFSFJ 2020). About 76% of all museums and exhibition venues are already active in museum education in general, something that could potentially also benefit the integration of offer for people living with dementia.

Many museums have a specific atmosphere that helps visitors to orientate themselves and focus on the content, which is considered beneficial. This is particularly important for people living with dementia. Architecture, interior design and exhibitions often create an immediate sense of what the museum is about. Exhibits stimulate the senses, arouse curiosity and offer simple conversation starters, which makes communication easier for people living with dementia, especially if language is difficult. They can relate more easily to something concrete than to abstract thoughts. Museums therefore offer an environment that is calm, stimulating and not overwhelming, which is beneficial for people with cognitive impairments (BMFSFJ 2020).

In 2001, John Zeisel and Sean Caulfield founded the international cultural project “Artists for Alzheimer's – ARTZ”. This led to the first museum tours for people living with dementia in 2006, including at the Louvre in Paris and the MoMA in New York. The so-called MoMA Alzheimer's project ran from 2007 to 2014, but is still being continued. It aimed to expand the cultural offering for people living with dementia both nationally and internationally. It was funded by the MetLife Foundation. The project developed materials that museums and social organisations could use to enable cultural participation. In 2009, a publication was published with guidelines for designing such art programmes and an accompanying booklet with thematic modules and art reproductions from the MoMA collection. The first museum tour for people living with dementia took place in Germany in 2007 at the Lehmbruck Museum Duisburg. Results from

studies on museum services designed for people living with dementia strongly indicated an improvement in mood and increased well-being of those affected (BMFSFJ 2020).

Practice examples in Germany:

Lehmbruck Museum Duisburg: First ever offer for people living with dementia in Germany. Development of the concept by Sybille Kastner and Friederike Winkler. Adoption into the museum's regular offerings. In addition, continuous conceptual developments towards museum educational offers, workshops, training courses, lectures and publications. Establishment of a network through museum distributors and institutions to be in contact with people living with dementia.

(https://lehmbruckmuseum.de/vermittlung/angebote/besucherinnen-mit-besonderen-beduerfnissen/)

Kunsthalle Bremen: Originally an art project/ field research in which people living with dementia were artistically active in a studio programme in cooperation with the Kunsthalle Bremen in 2008. Integration by the museum into its programme entitled 'Making memories' as a special programme outside the regular programme: Moderated art viewing for people living with dementia and their relatives. However, this initiative focuses more on enabling cultural participation rather than active social participation.

(https://www.aktion-demenz.de/index.php/foerderprogramm/projektberichte/124-making-memories-kunstvermittlung-fuer-menschen-mit-demenz-und-qualifizierung-fuer-pflegende-bremen)

LWL-Industriemuseum Zeche Nachtigall: Themed tours of the Westphalian State Museum for groups from care homes since 2010. At the same time, an outreach programme is being developed to reach people with limited mobility. Here, museum employees go into the care homes with an outfit and exhibits that match the theme (example: miners and exhibits from the mining industry). This stimulates the memories of dementia patients and promotes a potential for identification, as many people here come from the Ruhr region. Additionally, it establishes a network for reflection and further development.

(https://www.lwl-kultur.de/de/inklusion/angebote-fur-menschen-mit-dementiellen-erkrankungen/#:~:text=Die%20LWL%2DMuseen%20f%C3%BCr%20Industriekultur,weckt%20Erinnerung%E2%80%9C%20mit%20verschiedenen%20Themenschwerpunkten)

Kunstmuseum Bonn: Training of art educators from the Bundeskunsthalle and the Kunstmuseum Bonn by the art educators from the Lehmbruck Museum. Focus on the aesthetic-practical experience of participants with dementia. Continuous 'Farben im Kopf' workshops since 2011. Sensory-orientated learning through artistic-practical activities in the studio space.

(https://www.kunstmuseum-bonn.de/de/vermittlung/inklusion/#:~:text=Farben%20im%20Kopf%20%E2%80%93%20f%C3%BCr%20Menschen%20mit%20Demenz&text=Wir%20begleiten%20Menschen%20mit%20Demenz,seinen%20Kunstwerken%20und%20wunderbaren%20R%C3%A4umen)

2.2.2 Music offerings

Music accompanies people from the very beginning, as even foetuses react to music. Music is also very important for people living with dementia, as it appeals to emotions, can awaken memories and serves as a means of communication, regardless of language skills. Making music together also promotes a sense of belonging and fosters relationships. There are a variety of musical programmes: therapeutic (music therapy) and participation-oriented formats. Music therapy is usually offered on an outreach basis in care facilities or the home environment. In the last 15 years, music geragogy has become established, creating a wide range of group activities in care facilities for older humans, music schools or neighbourhoods, often in cooperation with professional musicians or cultural institutions. Musical participation is widely possible, reaching from church concerts to open-air festivals, depending on the individual preferences of those affected. However, barriers exist, for example, due to long event durations, large crowds or strict rules of behaviour. As with museums, music programs offer the advantage of being structurally widespread throughout Germany, thus facilitating regional accessibility. However, these offers are usually organised specifically for and not with this target group (BMFSFJ 2020).

Practice examples in Germany:

Herzmusik – Specific concerts for people living with dementia: Networking of musicologist Anja Renczikowski in 2012 with various concert halls, orchestras and dementia experts to develop the pilot project 'Auf Flügeln der Musik'. A concert concept geared towards the needs of people living with dementia, in which a specific accompanying programme is integrated. The people involved in the project all expressed similar motivations, namely that it is almost a moral obligation to open up concerts to all people in order to enable everyone to participate in culture. The project was continued by the Duisburg and Essen Philharmonic Orchestras under the name 'Herzmusik'. However, social participation in its breadth can only be achieved at a low level, so inclusion remains the goal of the initiative.

(https://duisburger-philharmoniker.de/Konzerte/herzmusik-klasse-klassik-senior-2024-2025/#:~:text=Musik%20kann%20bei%20Menschen%20mit,Emotionen%20aller%20Menschen%20gleicherma%C3%9Fen%20an)

Rap-CD REMINITENZ – The idea of giving people with cognitive impairments a voice through music at *Dementia Support Stuttgart* arose from contact with a care giver and rap musician. In a CD project, people living with dementia contributed their personal stories and thoughts to rap songs, although none of them had any previous experience of such music production. In open discussions with the participants, individual themes such as the joy of life, nature, love and social pressure were explored. Employees from *Dementia Support Stuttgart* provided support as writing assistants and drafted lyrics, which were revised together. After approval, the lyrics were put into song form by the rap musician and set to music together with other musicians. The result is stunning: a professionally produced audio CD with booklet, lyrics and photos of the participants.

(https://demenzjournal.com/magazin/kultur/buehne/personenzentrierte-raps/)

Länger fit durch Musik! – As a member and actor of the "National Dementia Strategy", the "Bundesmusikverband Chor & Orchester e.V." (BMCO) has been running the "Länger fit durch Musik!" funding programme for dementia-sensitive music-making since the beginning of 2023. The project is aimed specifically at the educational dimension of clubs, choirs, orchestras and ensembles from the amateur music sector as they can act as places of well-being and co-creation for people living with dementia.

(https://bundesmusikverband.de/foerderung/lfdm/)

2.2.3 Other offers

An initiative to promote the active participation of people living with dementia is the brochure published by the *Kompetenzzentrum Demenz*. It is aimed at professional and voluntary carers of people living with dementia as well as cultural organisations that would like to open themselves up to the active participation of those affected in culture and, what is new here in particular, in nature. The organisation of cultural and nature-based experiences promotes a calm atmosphere and the stimulation of the senses, essential things for people living with dementia. Examples include activities such as visits to wildlife parks, tried and tested programmes in Schleswig-Holstein (Kompetenzzentrum Demenz). *Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz* even extends the cultural participation of people living with dementia to church institutions, here in Speyer. It emphasises the importance of the church as a significant place of personal feeling and faith, something that particularly stimulates the sensitivity of those affected (Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz 2021).

Practice examples in Germany:

"Kultur und Natur in Schleswig-Holstein erleben" [Experience culture and nature in Schleswig-Holstein], conducted from 2020-2012 by the Dementia Competence Centre. Groups of up to 15 people successfully visited wildlife parks such as 'Eekholt'. Through this experience, the offer of cultural participation on a familiar and immediate mode could also be extended to dance cafés, farm cafés or singing meetings/choirs. It was possible to create a familiar and immediate atmosphere because the programmes were also possible on a smaller or regional/rural scale.

(https://www.demenz-sh.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/kulturbroschuere_web1.pdf)

Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz (Speyer) – Cultural institutions such as the Historical Museum of the Palatinate, the Purrmann House, an art association and the Archaeological Showcase are involved. Together, they are committed to facilitating cultural participation for people living with dementia. Special methods are used to adapt content and language to their needs and activate memories. Numerous institutions such as churches, libraries, monasteries, care facilities and voluntary groups support the project. The "Abenteuer Kultur wagen" [Experience cultural adventures] initiative has set itself the goal of further expanding the network between culture, care and relatives, especially for people who still live at home; creating cultural offerings in churches and public spaces; and gaining additional sponsors and to strengthen public relations work.

(https://www.netzwerkstelle-demenz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/praxisbeispiele_materialien/kunst_und_kultur/speyer_kulturelle_teilhabe_2015-2021.pdf)

2.2.4 Offers for professionals

The availability and accessibility of training and further education opportunities to integrate people living with dementia into cultural practices are also a factors worthy of consideration. While the *Kunstmuseum Bonn* [art museum Bonn] offers training courses on creative work and artistic techniques for care and support staff in general, a special project called "KuBA – Kunstbegleiter/Kunstbegleiterin für Menschen im Alter und mit Demenz" [Art companion for older people and people living with dementia], a cooperation between *Kunst:dialog* and the *International Institute for Subjective Experience and Research* (ISER), aims to provide further training designed for artists as art guides for older people and with dementia as well. This further education programme is aimed at artists from different disciplines. It teaches how existing artistic qualifications can be used to support older people and people living with dementia to enable a high-quality, art-based dialogue. The *Bundesakademie für Kulturelle Bildung Wolfenbüttel e.V.,* in cooperation with the research institute *Geragogics* (FoGera), is endeavouring to qualify creative artists to actively initiate high-quality creative work with older people ("KUNSTgeragogik"). Another project, "Kulturgeragogik" is a one-year certificate course organised by the *Institut für Bildung und Kultur e.V.* (IBK) and *FH Münster Faculty of Social Work* providing a sound grounding for everyday professional life. The "(de)mentia+art" initiative offers various training courses on general, practical cultural education and on enabling cultural and social participation. Another project managed by ISER, "Spielleiter für Menschen mit Demenz" is a further training course for actors, directors, theatre educators, and dance therapists with the aim of reflecting on the further development of artistic-acting and therapeutic working methods. This enables person-centred support for people affected by dementia (BMFSFJ 2020).

Overall, it has been found that there are still relatively few targeted offers for people living with dementia and their relatives in the cultural sector. Some good examples of training opportunities for educators and other professionals have been found. Offers specifically aimed at relatives that promote engagement with the topic of culture are scarce.

Initiatives:

Kubia is the competence centre for cultural education for senior citizens and inclusive culture. It supports cultural stakeholders and cultural institutions in North Rhine-Westphalia in shaping an age-friendly and inclusive cultural landscape with forward-looking concepts and innovative models. Kubia is institutionally funded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The centre aims to enable barrier-free access to art and culture in care and dementia. To this end, the initiative offers further training, counselling and cultural events.

(https://www.kubia.nrw/)

Fachverband Kunst- und Kulturgeragogik e.V. [Professional Association for Art and Culture Geragogy] is an association of graduates, lecturers and directors of art and culture geragogy qualifications. The focus here is on the exchange of experience and further training in the form of specialist meetings and the transfer of expertise and knowledge among trained arts and cultural educators. The association also works together with institutions in the cultural, educational, and health sectors. At the beginning of 2025, the expert committees of the German Cultural Council were restaffed. Kunst- und Kulturgeragogik e.V. was appointed to the Council for Socioculture

and Cultural Education. The professional association is one of the 265 member associations of the Cultural Council and is actively involved in cultural policy discussions. And in March 2025, the guide “Gemeinsam für Kulturelle Teilhabe im Alter!” was published, a joint project by kubia, the KDA, the regional offices for old age, care and dementia in NRW and our professional association.

(https://fachverband-kkg.de/)

2.3 Challenges for people living with dementia, informal carers and stakeholders in the cultural sector

> “I think the biggest hurdle is accepting people for who they are right now. That can be challenging in public spaces. There are too many people and too much input for too long.”
>
> (Susanne Schmidt-Neubauer, counsellor, artist, workshop leader)

Our desk research showed that people living with dementia may experience changes in their ability to carry out familiar activities and maintain social connections, as a result of cognitive changes. Over time, decisions are increasingly made on their behalf and their social participation decreases. At the same time, many people adopt an avoidant attitude when dealing with people affected by dementia, unless they are affected themselves. Yet people living with dementia have similar social participation needs to others: They want meaningful activities, social closeness and affirmation of their identity. This also includes cultural participation. Despite the condition, their ability to have emotional and sensory experiences in cultural institutions, such as museums, concerts or libraries, remains intact, but they are increasingly dependent on support. This poses a number of challenges for those affected, but also for carers as cultural participation is still far too limited, either because new programmes are rarely designed or existing ones remain difficult to access.

The interview results strongly support these findings, illustrating how the preserved emotional and sensory responsiveness of people living with dementia can be meaningfully engaged through cultural participation - provided that appropriate support is available. They also reflect the structural and social barriers described in the literature, which continue to limit access to cultural experiences despite a clear and ongoing desire for connection, identity, and meaningful activity.

The interviews revealed a range of barriers - both practical and emotional - that limit access to cultural institutions for people living with dementia and their carers. These challenges include environmental obstacles, lack of accessible information, individual perceptions, and broader societal attitudes.

Several carers highlighted the physical and structural barriers that make visits difficult or even impossible. Narrow toilets, a lack of handrails, steep staircases without lifts, and generally poor wheelchair accessibility were all mentioned. Loud environments and overstimulating settings were also described as overwhelming for individuals living with dementia. The absence of suitable facilities, such as accessible toilets and provisions for managing incontinence, further discouraged participation.

For those reliant on a wheelchair or with limited mobility, simply navigating public transport and cultural spaces posed considerable difficulty. In some cases, additional bureaucratic issues were identified - such as delays in the official recognition of a person's disability status - making it harder to access support, discounts, or suitable services.

A lack of awareness about existing dementia-friendly programmes was another key issue. Some carers stated that they might have taken advantage of these offerings had they known about them. Cultural institutions often fail to communicate clearly what visitors can expect, which leaves carers feeling unsure about whether the experience will be appropriate or manageable for their loved ones.

In other cases, the desire to take part in cultural activities was simply not present - neither on the part of the person living with dementia nor their carer - particularly when such experiences had not been part of their shared routine prior to the onset of dementia. Some carers admitted to underestimating the abilities of their relatives and refrained from planning cultural outings out of concern that the person might not be able to follow the content or might not enjoy the experience.

This uncertainty is frequently accompanied by fear of judgement. Carers expressed anxiety about how dementia-related behaviours might conflict with the expected norms in cultural venues. Concerns about privacy - for instance, fear of being filmed during events - also deterred participation. The risk of overstimulation or emotional strain added to these worries.

Finally, the format and duration of many events were seen as unsuitable. Exhibitions or concerts that were too long or presented too much information at once were described as exhausting and inappropriate. Traditional formats do not always align with the needs of people living with dementia, who often benefit more from shorter, simpler, and more flexible experiences.

One challenge for cultural institutions is that the integration of people living with dementia into cultural events requires extensive sensitisation and training of those involved. In turn, only training programmes for cultural guides and close cooperation with cultural institutions, such as museums or church organisations, could ensure the quality and reach of the offerings (Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz 2021). New integrated inclusive services serve all users, regardless of whether they are affected by dementia or not. Using the example of the 'library', it is pointed out that many basic rules for dealing with people living with dementia, such as addressing a person directly and respectfully and refraining from "embarrassing" questions, are helpful for successful communication in general. By expanding the services, such as cooperation with partners, detailed planning and the right choice of media, the position of the cultural institution, in this case the library, can already be strengthened at a structural level. However, this requires a rethink of the entire range of services with regard to the needs and barriers of the target group that need to be overcome. This poses a challenge as, in addition to a rethink, there are also the personnel and financial costs involved. However, as already mentioned, the bundling and acquisition of resources would be an investment that benefits the cultural institution as a whole rather than the individual user (Spree 2013).

The need for adaptability due to external and spontaneous challenges is essential as well: During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growing need to continue cultural events digitally or through safe, small group formats. The pandemic has severely restricted the cultural participation of people living with dementia, which mainly took place in inpatient facilities or in

the family environment. Previous cultural events for this target group cannot currently be organised as usual. Nevertheless, initiators did not want to let the existing contacts break off and were therefore increasingly offering digital impulses and design suggestions. For example, *Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz* has published photographic works and accompanying booklets during Advent seasons. The aim was to continue to support those living with dementia and their environment in the best possible way. (Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz 2021).

The varying degree of illness also proves to be a challenging difficulty: During a special guided tour for people living with dementia at the *Historisches Museum der Pfalz* in 2016, the "range of different starting points was too wide to do justice to everyone," says exhibition guide Andrea Braun (Netzwerk Kultur und Demenz 2021).

Also, the interviews highlight an urgent need for better training, networking, and institutional awareness, confirming and complementing the insights from current research on dementia-friendly cultural practices and several important gaps and barriers were identified in relation to skills, knowledge, and the professionalisation of dementia-friendly cultural practices.

Informal carers and cultural practitioners alike expressed a clear need for more information about existing programmes specifically tailored to people living with dementia. One carer, for instance, stated she would have welcomed more details on dementia-friendly offers but had not seen it as the responsibility of cultural institutions to actively reach out. Others noted that while the desire among museums and similar institutions to become more dementia-friendly certainly exists, a lack of coordination and networking between stakeholders significantly hinders practical implementation.

A central challenge lies in the absence of trained personnel and structured guidance. Interviewees noted that current offers often do not adequately consider the specific needs of people living with dementia. There is limited availability of guided tours or cultural activities that are adapted in format, pace, or content. The structuring of groups, creating calm and safe settings, and managing group dynamics without stigmatisation - especially when carers are also present - requires specific skills. Additionally, the emotional and cognitive needs of participants must be taken into account, which is often overlooked in standard formats.

Another gap lies in the lack of training and support for cultural staff. There is a notable absence of systematic training opportunities focused on communicating with people living with dementia or adapting cultural education methods. One interviewee shared that she was unaware of any such training in Germany and had to teach herself or rely on informal learning from professionals in her circle. Others mentioned that museum educators need to be willing to deviate from conventional ways of presenting knowledge and overcome common fears or misconceptions - such as assuming that people with dementia are likely to behave aggressively.

It becomes evident that while informal carers mainly emphasised structural and physical barriers, the interviewed experts brought to light a deeper level of systemic shortcomings: namely, the lack of trained professionals and a structural rethinking of cultural practices. As the literature points out, integrating people living with dementia into cultural life requires extensive sensitisation and training efforts. Institutions such as libraries or museums must rethink their entire service approach, not only to reduce barriers but to design inclusive services that benefit all users. This shift, while resource-intensive, strengthens the role of cultural institutions long-term.

2.4 Examples of best practices in dementia-friendly cultural spaces

2.4.1 Auf Flügeln der Musik – Konzertprogramme für Menschen mit Demenz [Federal state: North Rhine-Westphalia]

For people living with dementia, music can serve as an important gateway to their inner world and, at the same time, as a bridge to the outside world. **Concerts** offer meeting places for those affected, their relatives, carers, and individuals interested in culture.

Until recently, such concerts had primarily taken place as private house concerts in a limited number of care facilities. The aim of the project *Auf Flügeln der Musik* [On the wings of music] - funded in 2012-2013 by the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the Ministry of Culture of North Rhine-Westphalia - was therefore to develop dementia-friendly concert formats and accompanying programmes, to trial them in practice, and to evaluate them scientifically. This process was grounded in dialogue with those affected and in cooperation with experts from academia and care practice.

As part of the initiative, cultural institutions in North Rhine-Westphalia - including concert halls, music academies, concert educators, and musicians - received support in the form of training, consultancy, assistance with public relations, and help with networking with dementia care professionals. The most important cooperation partner and co-sponsor of the project was the 'Kuratorium Deutsche Altershilfe' (KDA), the information and coordination centre of the state initiative Dementia Service NRW. In recognition of its innovative approach, the project was awarded the BKM Prize for Cultural Education in 2014.

A central objective was to design, implement, and evaluate concert and supporting programmes tailored to the needs of people living with dementia. By focusing on positive emotional and sensory experiences, the project aimed to enable those affected, along with their relatives, to participate more fully in social and cultural life despite their condition.

The project's representatives emphasise that, in light of demographic changes, cultural institutions must adapt more and more to the needs of older people, particularly those living with dementia. The project documentation outlines several important considerations for planning and implementing these offerings. It highlights that creating a more inclusive cultural offering requires close collaboration between dementia experts and cultural institutions, as well as a willingness to develop new event formats that are tailored to specific target groups.

The first events organised under the title *Auf Flügeln der Musik* received very positive feedback and demonstrated a strong demand for such cultural offerings. Evaluations revealed above-average well-being scores among participants, suggesting that concert attendance can represent a valuable leisure activity for people living with dementia.

Although the pilot project has ended, the initiatives and concerts are still ongoing.

Additional information is available at the following link:
https://www.kubia.nrw/wissen/veroeffentlichungen/auf-fluegeln-der-musik/

2.4.2 (de)mentia+art - Kultur für Menschen

The (de)mentia+art is a broad initiative aiming to develop a model of cultural participation for people living with dementia. This led to the development of a model called “Teilhabeorientierte Vermittlung” [participation-oriented education]. It enables people to have intensive social experiences when discovering aesthetic or historical objects as a group. Their own opinions, experiences and feelings are a structural part of this. The museum guide actively moderates and guides this discovery in a group.

The focus is on inclusion and the involvement of relatives as well. In addition, professionals and volunteers are to be trained as cultural counsellors. Practical training is also offered for employees in the cultural sector who want to offer programmes for people living with dementia. Cooperation takes place with many institutions from the fields of culture and education, nursing and care throughout the German-speaking area and many parts of Austria. Clients include federal and state ministries, as well as municipal networks, welfare organisations and educational institutions. This already promotes communal structures. Experience was gained from over 300 guided tours in various art museums, historical collections and houses with a spiritual focus, as well as more than 30 chamber concerts and around the same number of concerts in other music formats. The initiative aims to address demographic developments and challenges, while actively incorporating the processes of historical and current social change. In doing so, it always has inclusion and diversity in mind. The latest “Guide Kulturbegleitung Inklusion” focussing on cognitive and mental illnesses to qualify for the fields of culture and care/support. The training courses are mostly aimed at the two areas that have to work together in social and cultural inclusion programmes, the cultural institutions and the care facilities on the other hand. This enables networks and joint platforms. The qualification comprises four training courses/modules per area with final reflection. The initiative is ongoing.

Additional information is available at the following link: https://dementia-und-art.de/

2.4.3 Kubia [Federal state: North Rhine-Westphalia]

Kubia is the competence centre for cultural education for older people and inclusive culture. It supports cultural stakeholders and cultural institutions in North Rhine-Westphalia in shaping an age-friendly and inclusive cultural landscape with forward-looking concepts and innovative models. Kubia is institutionally funded by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. The centre aims to enable barrier-free access to art and culture in care and dementia. To this end, the initiative offers further training, counselling and cultural events.

Kubia financially supports projects specially designed for people living with dementia. For many people with cognitive, mental or physical impairments, museums are difficult or impossible to reach, especially in peripheral areas. (de)mentia+art developed a digital and location-independent education format that can ensure interactive participation. The project made it clear that distance and weather are important factors that can make participation difficult, especially in rural areas. The “Museumsführungen für Menschen mit Demenz in Pflegeeinrichtungen” project was launched in 2023 to integrate the format into care facilities in rural areas. Staff from six institutions received training. Visual and acoustic optimisation in particular is essential for digital success. The format can be used repeatedly and thus implemented permanently. The project was very well received by participants, who continued

to discuss artefacts with each other after the guided tours. The training project ended in 2025 with an exchange of experiences.

The competence centre also offers workshops. The workshop “Museum und Menschen mit Demenz: Zwischen Vermittlung für besondere Zielgruppen und einer neuen Sicht auf kulturelle Teilhabe” [Museums and people living with dementia: between education for special target groups and a new perspective on cultural participation] in 2025 aimed to reveal ambivalences in dealing with people living with dementia. Nine areas of tension were highlighted in which museum education operates, for example tensions between protection and exclusion. These can also be utilised productively in a reflexive approach, allowing concrete ideas to be developed for communicating with people. The workshop was aimed at art educators with or without previous experience of working with people living with dementia. A small contribution towards the costs was required.

Kubia has joined with the regional offices for ageing, care and dementia as well as with cultural institutions and cultural professionals in North Rhine-Westphalia to form the “Netzwerk Demenz und Kulturelle Teilhabe NRW” [Dementia and cultural participation North Rhine-Westphalia network] (see section 2.2).

Additional information is available at the following link: (https://www.kubia.nrw/

2.4.4 Länger fit durch Musik!

As a member and actor of the “National Dementia Strategy” (see section 2.2), the “Bundesmusikverband Chor & Orchester e.V.” (BMCO) has been running the “Länger fit durch Musik!” funding programme for dementia-sensitive music-making since the beginning of 2023. The project is aimed specifically at clubs, choirs, orchestras and ensembles from the amateur music sector.Over the four-year term of the programme, the focus will be on awareness-raising measures, the promotion of model projects and training opportunities. The programme is designed to provide valuable educational work and to make the results of the scientific monitoring and the practical experience of the ensembles available to a wide audience in the long term. The programme will be scientifically monitored and will conclude with a specialist congress. The programme comprises four areas of activity: (1) awareness-raising measures, (2) promotion of exemplary projects, (3) qualification offers and (4) scientific monitoring with a concluding congress.

Music ensembles, choirs and orchestras act as places of well-being and co-creation for people living with dementia. Music therefore specifically enables participation. The training programme supports the ensemble leaders in their work and provides specialist input from experts. It is part of the funding programme and cannot be attended separately from it. Funds are provided by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry of Health (BMFSJ) as part of the “National Dementia Strategy”. The project aims to encourage especially amateur ensembles to apply for funding. Funding of up to 9500 euros could be applied for. Funding is available for musical projects that actively involve people living with dementia, for example through regular joint rehearsals, workshops or concert series. In the second funding round, 20 model projects are selected and funded for the year 2025.

In 2026, the BMCO will once again be organising an interdisciplinary congress in Karlsruhe under the title “Musizieren für und mit Menschen mit Demenz – Perspektiven für Chöre und Instrumentalensembles” in cooperation with the Karlsruhe University of Education. The focus will be on music practice such as dementia-sensitive singing and music-making. The aim is to create new impulses for inclusive work in choirs and orchestras. The congress brings together experiences for a broad public and is therefore aimed at musicians, ensemble leaders, music therapists, carers and all interested people.

Additional information is available at the following link:
https://bundesmusikverband.de/foerderung/lfdm/

2.4.5 Kennst du noch? [City: Frankfurt am Main]

“Kennst du noch?” [Do you remember?] is a series of projects by the cooperation of the “Historisches Museum Frankfurt” [Historical Museum Frankfurt] and the association “Bürgerinstitut e.V.” for people living with dementia and their relatives and carers, in which the memories of the participants take centre stage. Memories in a museum, as a place of Frankfurt's history and the stories of its inhabitants: numerous points of contact with collective and individual remembrance are possible here.

“Kennst du noch? **Erzählcafé**“ [Do you remember? Storytelling café] was a group programme for people living with dementia, led by experts from the Bürgerinstitut and the Historical Museum. Memories and biographical, personal experiences should be evoked, as many objects from earlier times have now disappeared from our everyday lives. Nostalgic objects such as records, toys and old household items stimulate memories and thus promote cognitive abilities, independence and quality of life. Remembering should involve all the senses, which is why an accompanying programme supplemented by appropriate music or food, such as snacks, coffee and cake, is offered. The focus of the Erzählcafés is not on the dementia itself, but on well-being and the shared dialogue, which is intended to have a stimulating effect. Those affected remain among themselves during this programme: “The independence of the participants is a valuable asset”, said Ann-Katrin Adams, heading the dementia department at the Bürgerinstitut. Nevertheless, the family members also came into contact with each other through the storytelling cafés: When dropping off and picking up the participants, moments of dialogue were created.

The first project period ran from 2020 to 2022, and the participation fee was 160€ per group programme with 8 dates. The project was sponsored by the Commerzbank Foundation, the Schambach Family Foundation and the ODDO BHF Foundation. After the project finished by the end of 2022, it has been continued with altered and new formats:

“Kennst du noch? **Erinnerungskoffer**” [Do you remember? Memory suitcase] is a group programme for care facilities. Thematically packed suitcases contain nostalgic everyday objects, which stimulate memories. As a self-organised meeting in small groups within the care facility, it is a flexible education concept that adapts to the individual needs of the group. Accompanying booklets with application tips and suggestions are also included and provide practical support. Erinnerungskoffer **digital** is the free online alternative aimed at people living with dementia, relatives and carers who are unable to visit the museum. Once again, the focus here is on

nostalgic everyday objects in various subject areas, as memories can also be stimulated online at any time, regardless of location.

Additional information is available at the following link:
https://www.buergerinstitut.de/kennstdunoch/

2.4.6 Die Gute Stunde

“Die Gute Stunde” [The good hour] is a non-profit initiative of humaQ gGmbH from Wiesbaden in cooperation with the Alzheimer Gesellschaft Wiesbaden. Since its beginning in early 2021, it offers online cultural events for older people and since June 2023 especially for people living with dementia and their relatives as well. In particular, the project wants to strengthen the cultural participation of people living with dementia. The formats are therefore interactive. Programmes have been developed and organised by a wide variety of artists and cultural professionals in the fields of music, poetry and art. “Die Gute Stunde” offers concerts, readings, art tours, film screenings etc. The aim is to create sensitive online encounters together with the guests that are enjoyable and offer a change from everyday life. One-hour events entitled ‘Raum’ are offered via the video conferencing software Zoom. The events are free of charge, but registration is required. Because the format is digital, the project is suitable for people in their own homes as well as for people in care facilities.

Since the beginning of 2021, "Die Gute Stunde" has offered 40 digital cultural events and welcomed 1400 guests. The project is financially supported by the Hessian State Chancellery and its head, Minister of State Axel Wintermeyer. The “Die Gute Stunde” project won the "Hessen Smart gemacht - Miteinander lokal digital" competition in the "Smarte Gemeinschaft" category in 2022. The Hessian state government honoured this with 5,000 €. The competition provided for innovative projects to be selected for follow-up funding for expansion and further development. In 2022, "Die Gute Stunde" received follow-up funding of around 49,000 € from the state.

Additional information is available at the following link: https://diegutestunde.org/

2.5 Recommendations

"We need to ask those affected what matters to them. Without their input, we won't be able to develop offers that meet their needs. They must be involved in the decision-making process!”

“Working with people living with dementia gives art educators freedom for spontaneity. Art education and artistic activities can be develop in the here and now.”

“I love being amazed by things that are unpredictable. People with dementia are much more open because their emotional experiences come to the fore. Encountering them on this level, with your own passion and emotionality, is crucial.”

(Susanne Schmidt-Neubauer, counsellor, artist, workshop leader)

As described in section 2.3, the interviews illustrate the need for greater physical accessibility, clearer communication, increased awareness, and a more inclusive mindset that recognises both the capabilities and support needs of people living with dementia and their carers. Based on insights gained from the interviews, several recommendations can be derived to support cultural institutions in becoming more inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to people living with dementia and their carers. These recommendations align with the overarching goals of the Memorable project and are structured around awareness-raising, infrastructural and programme adaptation, professional development, and cross-sector collaboration.

Awareness and sensitivity in institutions

Cultural institutions should actively welcome people living with dementia rather than passively including them. This includes clear, affirmative messaging and avoiding exclusionary language or practices. Awareness campaigns and public relations efforts should highlight the value and benefits of cultural participation for this group, while simultaneously counteracting stigma and misconceptions surrounding dementia.

Training for all staff members - from front-of-house personnel to curators - is essential to foster a culture of respect, patience, and tolerance. This includes raising awareness of dementia-related symptoms, promoting inclusive attitudes, and encouraging empathetic and flexible communication strategies.

Barrier-free environments and accessibility

Practical and infrastructural adjustments are fundamental. Interviewees stressed the importance of:

- Barrier-free access (e.g. lifts, ramps, handrails)
- Accessible toilets with incontinence materials available
- Designated wheelchair seating in events and theatres
- Clear signage and pictograms to reduce cognitive load
- Quiet, calm settings to prevent overstimulation
- Seating opportunities throughout exhibitions or performances

Organisers should also address common concerns of carers in advance: Will there be appropriate facilities? Can the person leave discreetly if overwhelmed? Will they be filmed or made to feel exposed? Clear, honest communication reduces anxiety and facilitates attendance.

Adaptation of formats and programme design

Cultural offerings should be tailored to the sensory, emotional and cognitive needs of people living with dementia:

- Short, focused sessions with reduced information density

- Clear narratives (e.g. a simple story about an artist or artwork)
- Interactive or bodily engagement (e.g. music, movement)
- Flexible, person-centred formats, allowing attendees to come and go as needed
- Avoiding complex themes or fast-paced programmes

Importantly, programme descriptions should include practical information on what to expect, what participants might need, and which level of mobility or cognitive ability is required.

Co-creation and inclusion of people living with dementia

A central principle that emerged was the necessity of co-creation**.** Rather than designing programmes *for* people with dementia, institutions should develop them *with* those affected. Asking individuals about their interests, life stories and preferences allows for truly relevant and respectful offerings.

This participatory approach must include carers and health professionals, but most importantly, the people living with dementia themselves, in all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Capacity Building and Professionalisation

There is a clear need for regular, structured training and educational formats for cultural professionals, carers, and artists. These should include:

- Understanding dementia (types, symptoms, stages)
- Communication techniques (slow pace, simple language, patience)
- Non-verbal and sensory-based facilitation methods
- How to adapt content and manage group dynamics respectfully
- Validating rather than correcting participants
- Creating safe, empowering environments

Training should be ongoing, allowing staff to gain practical experience over time and build confidence in engaging with this audience.

Practical suggestions for training delivery

To meet the Memorable project's aims, training should:

- Include immersive experiences (e.g. shadowing, spending time with people with dementia across age groups)
- Offer experiential workshops that simulate common challenges
- Be delivered in partnership with dementia experts and carers
- Provide hands-on opportunities for applying learned methods
- Be interdisciplinary, fostering exchange between cultural professionals, care providers, and community organisations
- Allow space for reflection, feedback, and co-development

Regularly offering dementia-inclusive events also allows facilitators to gain familiarity and competence.

Institutional commitment and cultural policy

The development of dementia-friendly cultural spaces must be more than a project-based initiative - it requires institutional commitment. This includes embedding dementia-friendly offerings into long-term programming, allocating budgets for inclusion work, and positioning dementia as a recognised audience need in cultural policy frameworks.

Political and financial support is necessary to create sustainable structures and provide social organisations with tools for outreach (e.g. newsletters and databases of inclusive events).

Cross-sector collaboration and knowledge exchange

Strong collaboration between cultural institutions, dementia experts, carers, and community groups are crucial. Shared learning spaces and feedback loops can help identify challenges early and foster continuous improvement. International exchange - despite differing cultural landscapes - can offer fresh perspectives and adaptable practices.

In conclusion, becoming truly dementia-inclusive means acknowledging the diversity of experiences and needs among people living with dementia and their carers. Cultural institutions have the opportunity - and responsibility - to shape spaces where participation, dignity, and joy remain accessible for everyone, regardless of cognitive abilities.

More detailed recommendations for music and art education can be found here (in German):

Projektdokumentation „Auf Flügeln der Musik“ (Institut für Bildung und Kultur e.V. and Kompetenzzentrum für Kultur und Bildung im Alter): https://www.kubia.nrw/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/AFDM_Abschlussdoku_Nachdruck_2014_web.pdf

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