MEMORABLE

NATIONAL REPORT
PORTUGAL

Co-funded by the European Union

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This report presents the findings of desk research and interviews conducted in Portugal 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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1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Project context

This report presents the findings of desk research and interviews conducted in Portugal 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 with dementia and their caregivers 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 caregivers 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, caregivers, 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. Searches were conducted on Google Scholar using the following keywords: *"dementia", "Portugal", "arts"*, and *"culture"*. Approximately 20 relevant publications were identified and reviewed. Additionally, the websites of Alzheimer Portugal and Alzheimer Europe were consulted to gather further documentation, alongside a review of Portuguese legislation related to dementia and cultural inclusion. Eurostat data was also analysed to assess the participation of people with disabilities in cultural or sports activities in Portugal.

To complement the desk research, semi-structured and narrative **interviews were conducted** with key stakeholders, including:

Table 1 – Overview of interviewees: number, gender distribution and interview format.

Interviewee	Number	Gender distribution	Interview format

People living with dementia	1	1 Female	Onsite
Informal caregivers	2	2 Male	Onsite
Experts and practitioners in cultural inclusion of people living with dementia	7	7 Female	Online

1.2.1 Interviews with people living with dementia and caregivers

In Portugal, although access to culture for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals living with dementia has gained increased attention, it remains limited.

According to a study commissioned by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, respondents with lower educational background (50%) and those from modest socio-professional backgrounds, such as 50% of manual workers and 43% of service workers, are most likely to cite a lack of interest or a preference for other activities as reasons for not visiting museums, historical monuments, archaeological sites, or art galleries (Pais, Magalhães and Antunes, 2020). Overall, cultural participation is more common among individuals from the upper-middle class, those with higher education, and residents of urban areas where access to cultural offerings is more frequent. As a result, access to culture in Portugal is far from universal or equitable.

To gather meaningful insights, SHINE 2Europe engaged with individuals already participating in a structured initiative - **the Museum Network for Dementia-Friendly Inclusion (Rede MID – Museus para a Inclusão na Demência)**. Established in 2023, the MID network brings together **twelve cultural institutions** committed to developing dementia-friendly programmes that promote autonomy, well-being, and inclusion. The participating institutions include two associations and ten museums, namely: Acesso Cultura, Alzheimer Portugal, Centro de Arte Moderna da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Jardim Botânico da Universidade de Coimbra, MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra, Museu de Lisboa – EGEAC (Empresa de Gestão de Equipamentos e Animação Cultural), Museu Municipal de Pombal, Museu Nacional Grão Vasco – DGPC (Direção – Geral do Património Cultural), Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro – DGPC e Museu Tesouro da Misericórdia de Viseu – SCMV (Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Viseu).

Three onsite interviews were held at the **Machado de Castro National Museum** in Coimbra. These interviews involved:

- One woman diagnosed with **mild cognitive impairment**. She was accompanied by her son, who provided support, when necessary, throughout the interview.
- Two **informal male caregivers**.

All three participants are involved in the "**EU no musEU" (ME at the musEUm) programme**, a pioneering dementia-friendly initiative in Portugal led by the Machado de Castro National Museum in partnership with Alzheimer Portugal. The project coordinator, played a crucial role in identifying and selecting participants. Each face-to-face session lasted between **90 to 120 minutes**, and took place in a familiar, welcoming environment to ensure participant comfort and openness.

Prior to each interview:

- Participants received information about the project.
- Informed consent was obtained.
- The project and interview process were explained in detail.

1.2.2 Interviews with experts and practitioners

Seven female experts participated in the online interviews, which were conducted in **three separate sessions**. Individual interview lasted approximately **60 minutes**, while **group sessions ranged from 90 to 120 minutes**. The sessions were organised as follows:

1. **Group interview** with:
    - Virgínia Gomes, project coordinator of the programme "EU no musEU" from Museu Nacional Machado de Castro (Coimbra)
    - Paula Cardoso and Graça Marcelino, 2 museum mediators and practitioners from Museu Nacional Grão Vasco, responsible for the "EU no musEU em Viseu"[1] programme (Viseu)
2. **Individual interview** with:
    - Filipa Aniceto, clinical psychologist from Alzheimer Portugal (Lisboa)
3. **Group interview** with:
    - Ana Costa, clinical psychologist at Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Vila Nova de Gaia)
    - Ana Rita Silva, neuropsychologist and Assistant Professor at the University of Coimbra (Coimbra)
    - Diana Pereira, cultural mediator at Museu Calouste Gulbenkian (Lisboa)

This 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

1.3 Introduction

Dementia is a condition resulting from various diseases or injuries and encompasses a group of neurodegenerative diseases (Mahomed and Pretorius, 2022). It is characterised by cognitive decline, affecting areas such as orientation, attention, judgment, language, and memory (Coelho *et al.*, 2020). Recognised as a public health crisis, dementia currently affects an estimated 55.2

[1] "EU no musEU" was replicated in Viseu under a protocol signed with the Machado de Castro National Museum (MNMC) and the Directorate-General of Alzheimer Portugal (APFADA). Through this partnership, the Misericórdia Treasury Museum of Viseu (MTMV) and the Grão Vasco National Museum (MNGV) joined efforts, combining their teams and designing a joint programme. This collaboration gave rise to "EU no musEU em Viseu".

million individuals, with cases expected to increase significantly by 2050. Alzheimer's disease is the most prevalent form, accounting for approximately 60–70% of cases (Regier, Hodgson and Gitlin, 2017).

According to Gonçalves-Pereira *et al.* (2021), estimates of the number of people with dementia have largely been based on prevalence rates from international studies or expert consensus. As a result, published Portuguese estimates have not incorporated evidence directly obtained from population-based fieldwork, leading to variations in reported figures. This is why the authors highlight the need for high-quality epidemiological data. They report that, according to the Portuguese 10/66 Dementia Research Group, there are 217,549 community dwellers (aged 65 or older and not institutionalised) with dementia in Portugal. Additionally, according to Alzheimer Europe (2019), data from 2018 estimated that over 193,500 individuals in Portugal were living with dementia, comprising approximately 133,500 women and nearly 60,000 men. Population projections suggest a slight decline in Portugal's total population between 2018 and 2025, followed by a more substantial decrease between 2025 and 2050. However, the number of people with dementia is expected to more than double, rising from 193,516 in 2018 to 346,905 in 2050. As a proportion of the total population, individuals with dementia are projected to constitute 3.82% in 2050, compared to 1.88% in 2018. Portugal surpasses the broader European trend, where dementia cases are expected to nearly double by 2050. A significant contributing factor is the substantial increase in the older adult population, particularly among those aged over 70, and more markedly, those over 85, whose numbers are projected to more than double between 2018 and 2050. According to a study of Alves, Duarte and Gomes (2024), which applies the methodology of Gonçalves-Pereira *et al.* (2021), individuals aged ≥80 years are projected to represent 75.0% of all dementia cases by 2080, up from 59.0% in 2020, with women being particularly affected.

Research indicates that nearly all individuals with dementia will experience behavioural symptoms, which tend to increase as the disease progresses. Symptoms like agitation, aggression, and restlessness are among the most challenging aspects of dementia care and a key factor in long-term care placement. **Nonpharmacological interventions** are recommended as the first line of treatment, with studies showing that **training caregivers** in these approaches can reduce caregiver burden and enable individuals to remain in the community longer (Regier, Hodgson and Gitlin, 2017).

1.4 The role of cultural spaces in enhancing well-being

1.4.1 Impact of arts and culture on people with dementia and their informal caregivers

According to Alzheimer Portugal (2023), individuals in the early to moderate stages of dementia in Portugal often face a lack of tailored activities that address their specific needs and preferences. Existing interventions primarily focus on therapeutic outcomes and mitigating cognitive and functional decline.

Nevertheless, some good practice examples have emerged to address this gap. One such initiative is REDE MID – Rede de Museus para a Inclusão na Demência (Museum Network for Dementia-Friendly Inclusion), which was created to develop and share best practices, and to train teams in cultural institutions on dementia-related topics (Alzheimer Portugal, 2023) - this

initiative will be explored further in the following sections. Another example is *EU no musEU*, as reported by Gomes and Santana (2019). This initiative makes museums more accessible to people with dementia through dedicated programmes tailored to their needs. It incorporates artistic activities such as theatre, storytelling, and dance, all of which have been highly rated by participants. These initiatives are not only **well received by informal caregivers**, who continue bringing their family members with dementia, but also validated through formal assessments, which indicate significant improvements in users' **emotional well-being** and **overall quality of life**.

A study by Regier, Hodgson and Gitlin (2017) analysed the relationship between dementia stage (mild, moderate, and severe) and activity types (*e.g.*, arts and crafts, physical exercise, cognitive tasks, music/entertainment, and sensory-based activities), as well as key activity setup characteristics such as duration and cueing or redirection needs. The findings highlight that **engagement in meaningful activities** can improve **mood**, enhance **daily functioning**, and **reduce behavioural symptoms**. The effectiveness of these activities depends on the individual's cognitive and functional abilities, requiring a tailored approach. Identifying personal interests helps maintain a **sense of self**, while caregivers should adapt activity complexity, cueing techniques, and engagement duration accordingly. According to this study, even short participation periods, such as 10 minutes for individuals with severe dementia, can have a positive impact on mood and well-being.

Additionally, a study from Delfa-Lobato, Guàrdia-Olmos and Feliu-Torruella (2021) found that cultural activities can increase **well-being**, assist with **social interaction and communication**, and improve the **quality of life** for individuals with cognitive impairments.

It is worth noting that a study is also being carried out at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, which requested support from Alzheimer Portugal to explore the correlation between cultural and nature visits and well-being outcomes. As Diana Pereira, cultural mediator at the Museum, explained: “The Portuguese Catholic University - Faculty of Health Sciences and Nursing, will assess the correlation between well-being indicators and the overall evaluation of the visit experience in the coming years. They will conduct quantitative monitoring using wearable devices, such as smartwatches, which measure and capture data like heart rate and heart rate variability. In addition, they will collect subjective measures using smiley-face rating scales - for both caregivers and people living with dementia”.

1.4.2 Examples of how cultural participation can support people living with dementia

Although there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate improvements in memory, language, or daily functioning directly attributable to cultural interventions, and no significant reductions have been reported in apathy, sadness, agitation, or anxiety, such interventions have generally been associated with significant improvements in overall cognition, quality of life, emotional wellbeing, socialisation, and communication, as well as a reduction in depressive symptoms (Delfa-Lobato, Guàrdia-Olmos and Feliu-Torruella, 2021). By fostering social engagement, enhancing cognitive function, providing emotional support, offering respite to caregivers, and

creating safe environments, arts and cultural activities yield a profoundly positive impact on the overall wellbeing of people with dementia (Soares, 2023).

For the mentioned reasons, ensuring the accessibility of cultural offerings in museums is fundamental to fostering an inclusive global society. As highlighted by Gomes and Santana (no date), cultural programmes that create spaces where personal narratives intersect with cultural heritage demonstrate how museums can play a meaningful role in supporting individuals with dementia. These initiatives help maintain a sense of purpose and societal connection, while fostering belonging and active participation. A notable outcome of such programmes, such as EU no musEU, is the spontaneous formation of self-organised support networks among informal caregivers. These caregivers often continue to meet socially outside the structured museum sessions, highlighting the programme's success in cultivating community, mutual support, and shared experience. As Paula Cardoso, cultural mediator from Grão Vasco, National Museum said "We need to build emotional bonds with the participants, it's like creating a family. Some participants have been with us since the very first session. Although the disease has progressed, they still feel well and supported."

Beyond museums, both passive and active engagement with music was also found to positively influence the behaviour and mood of older people with dementia. Music therapy has been shown to improve general cognition, quality of life, emotional wellbeing, and self-esteem, while reducing depression symptoms in individuals with dementia (van der Steen *et al.*, 2017).

Some studies have sought to create participatory moments defined by enjoyment, playfulness, and wellbeing in the present moment (Lima, 2024). The programme "Marcar o Lugar – Encontros no Museu", implemented in cultural spaces such as MAAT, Museu de Lisboa (both part of the MID Network), and the Centro Cultural de Belém, encouraged the active, spontaneous participation of people living with dementia and their caregivers. According to the interviewee from Alzheimer Portugal, involving both in shared sessions fosters a more horizontal communication dynamic, challenging the usual hierarchy in which the caregiver tends to hold a dominant role. This shift can lead to improved communication between them. Additional positive outcomes identified include increased self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as opportunities for learning and personal growth. These results are made possible by a flexible model that is broad enough to align with each museum's collection and incorporates diverse artistic languages - such as image, text, sound, and movement - while remaining adaptable to the interests and preferences of participants. As such, each programme is carefully tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of the group (Alzheimer Portugal, 2022a).

The use of a person-centred design approach in cultural participation - through participatory and sensory-based experiences - has proven beneficial for individuals living with dementia. In the ReMiND research project, particular attention was given to each person's biographical history, values, interests, and cultural background in the co-creation process. Sensory and cognitive stimulation games, co-designed with people living with dementia and implemented in care centres, have demonstrated a significant positive impact on well-being. These activities offer meaningful opportunities for engagement, social interaction, and personal expression (Lima, 2024).

Interviews revealed several benefits associated with cultural participation for people living with dementia, particularly emotional engagement and social connection. For example, one participant living with dementia in the "EU no musEU" project expressed a strong emotional

attachment to the initiative, describing it as her only regular outing from home. She participates in the project's monthly sessions and eagerly looks forward to each new event. Although she wishes there were more sessions, she acknowledges that her attendance depends on her daughter's availability, as her primary caregiver. Her son noted that while they have tried visiting other museums and exhibitions, those experiences tend to be quickly forgotten. In contrast, the sessions offered by the project "EU no musEU" evoke greater involvement and emotional impact.

Among caregivers, one highlighted the importance of the arts for his wife's well-being and cognitive stimulation, which led him to discover the "EU no musEU" programme. Another caregiver shared that although he stopped attending cultural events about five years ago due to his wife's declining mobility, he continues to play music at home, which still elicits a positive response from her. He learned about the programme through his wife's doctor, reflecting an example of cultural prescription and the recognised benefits of arts and culture for people with dementia.

Experts also emphasised the value of arts and culture in fostering connections and positive emotions. According to experts, the sessions held in various museums are not aimed at improving cognitive function, but rather at giving people living with dementia a voice, stimulating their senses and emotions, and creating meaningful spaces for self-expression. As an Alzheimer Portugal expert noted, Filipa Aniceto, "Creativity is preserved in dementia – it can be seen, and this confers well-being and dignity".

Additionally, experts highlighted the value of the relationships that develop between people living with dementia and their caregivers during joint sessions, as happens in the case of "Marcar o Lugar – Encontros no Museu". These activities provide a space for horizontal communication that is often lacking in everyday interactions. For informal caregivers attending sessions separately, alongside parallel sessions for people with dementia, the programmes offer opportunities to meet, share experiences, and sometimes create further occasions for social encounters. These connections contribute significantly to the overall positive impact of the initiatives.

1.5 Current state of dementia-friendly cultural institutions in Portugal

1.5.1 Overview of the availability and accessibility of cultural activities for people with dementia

In Portugal, the provision of cultural activities specifically designed for people living with dementia has been gradually increasing, mainly driven by initiatives from museums, non-profit organisations, and academic partnerships. However, the availability of such activities remains limited in scope and is mostly concentrated in urban areas. As Alzheimer Portugal (2023) notes, "at the national level, there are few museum programmes specifically designed for people with dementia and their caregivers".

Over the past decade, museum professionals have increasingly recognised that physical accessibility alone is insufficient to ensure meaningful and transformative engagement with diverse populations (Gomes e Santana, n.d.). Insights from interviews conducted in the sector reveal a general lack of training among cultural mediators in how to effectively engage with

people living with dementia - particularly in terms of communication, spatial organisation, and inclusive facilitation. Similarly, professionals working in care facilities also face challenges in navigating this engagement, with stigma frequently cited as a major barrier. This stigma often stems from the misconception that people with dementia are not capable of being creative or participating meaningfully in artistic or cultural experiences.

Since around 2011, a number of initiatives have emerged in Portugal, particularly within the museum sector. These include, among others, "EU no musEU", "Marcar o Lugar – Encontros no Museu", and the Rede MID (Museum Network for Dementia-Friendly Inclusion), a national network of cultural institutions working to create more dementia- and age-friendly environments (see Section 1.6 "Examples of Best Practices in Dementia-Friendly Cultural Spaces" for more details).

An example of the availability and accessibility of cultural activities for people with dementia is the programme offered by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. It offers a diverse range of cultural activities specifically designed for people with memory loss or a dementia diagnosis, as well as their caregivers. These include guided workshops in the Museum, Modern Art Centre and Gardens, with a focus on multisensory stimulation, well-being, and strengthening group relationships. Hands-on activities are integrated into the visits, whether through engaging with artworks or walking through the gardens. The Music Department also hosts narrated concerts in its Grande Auditório every quarter, which are targeted at school groups and older adults, including people living with dementia and their caregivers. All these programmes are designed for organised groups, are free of charge, and require prior booking (Alzheimer Portugal, no date c).

Cultural and artistic initiatives have also extended beyond museum spaces into care settings. The ReMiND research project (also featured in Section 1.6) has implemented cultural activities in care centres, promoting meaningful engagement with people living with dementia in more familiar or residential environments. Another initiative is the "#umdenós Project – Combating Unwanted Loneliness through the Voice of People with Dementia", which took place in Faro, Portimão, and Lagoa. This project aimed to improve quality of life and address unwanted loneliness among people with dementia through therapeutic sessions involving *biodanza*, theatre, and music. At the same time, it ran an awareness-raising campaign on unwanted loneliness, co-created with people living with dementia, caregivers, and former caregivers (Alzheimer Portugal, 2024).

Across many of these initiatives, the role of Alzheimer Portugal has been central. Established in 1988, Alzheimer Portugal is the main nationwide organisation dedicated to promoting the quality of life of people living with dementia, their families, and caregivers. One of its key areas of work is providing direct support to individuals with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia and their caregivers. Alzheimer Portugal also plays an instrumental role in enhancing service accessibility by supporting the development of inclusive cultural programmes. It offers consultancy and training to cultural institutions to foster more dementia-friendly practices. Moreover, the organisation maintains an online directory of support services and resources tailored to the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers (Alzheimer Portugal, no date a).

1.5.2 Participation in cultural or sports activities in Portugal

Eurostat (2024) provides data on the participation of individuals with disabilities in cultural and sports activities across different age groups and genders. Although this data focuses on disability rather than dementia specifically and does not include the percentage of people with dementia, it remains valuable for understanding the cultural and social engagement of people with disabilities, which may include individuals with dementia.

Although dementia typically begins at age 65, there is also young-onset dementia, which occurs before this age, with a higher prevalence starting from 45 (Loi, Cations and Velakoulis, 2023). For this reason, the analysis focused on age groups starting from 45 onwards, including 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, and 75-84 (see Table 2 – Percentage of persons participating in cultural or sport activities by sex, age, level of disability (activity limitation), activity type and frequency – at least once annually (Eurostat, 2024) and Table 3).

The data from Eurostat (2024) highlights a **clear decline in participation in cultural and sport activities with increasing age** across all activity types. This trend is seen in both occasional (at least once annually) and frequent (at least four times annually) participation and varies by gender and activity type. Overall, **frequent participation is significantly lower than occasional participation** across all age groups. **Women are more likely to engage in cultural activities** such as live performances and cinema, while **men show higher participation in sports events**. Among the various activity types, **visits to cultural sites show higher levels of participation across all age groups**, particularly when considering attendance at least once annually.

Table 2 – Percentage of persons participating in cultural or sport activities by sex, age, level of disability (activity limitation), activity type and frequency – at least once annually (Eurostat, 2024)

Type of activity	Age class: 45 - 54		Age class: 55 - 64		Age class: 65 - 74		Age class: 75 - 84	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cinema	26.2	27.4	13.5	15.5	9.6	9.3	3.8	4.2
Live performances	31.9	36.1	23.8	24.5	19.2	19.9	10.9	8.7
Cultural sites	40.2	40.5	31.9	32.6	24.7	24.7	17.5	13.2
Sports events	36.5	20.8	26.7	9.5	21.0	7.7	12.4	3.5

Table 3 – Percentage of persons participating in cultural or sport activities by sex, age, level of disability (activity limitation), activity type and frequency – at least 4 times annually (Eurostat, 2024)

Type of activity	Age class: 45 - 54		Age class: 55 - 64		Age class: 65 - 74		Age class: 75 - 84	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cinema	5.3	5.2	2.8	3.7	2.2	2.8	1.4	1.4

Live performances	9.4	9.7	6.4	5.3	5.3	4.5	2.4	1.0
Cultural sites	15.2	15.1	13.9	11.9	8.7	8.4	5.3	4.3
Sports events	19.2	10.2	14.0	3.6	10.7	3.4	5.6	0.6

Cinema attendance

Participation in cinema visits decreases significantly with age. Among the 45–54 age group, participation rates are similar for men (26.2%) and women (27.4%) at least once annually. However, by the 75–84 group, these figures drop to just 3.8% (men) and 4.2% (women). Frequent cinema attendance shows a similar pattern, with rates starting at around 5.3% (men) and 5.2% (women) in the 45–54 group, decreasing to 1.4% for both sexes in the 75–84 group.

Live performances attendance

Live performances (including theatre, concerts, ballet) attract higher participation than cinema, especially among women in the younger age groups. For instance, 36.1% of women aged 45–54 attend at least once a year, compared to 31.9% of men. The rates drop to 10.9% (men) and 8.7% (women) in the oldest group. Frequent attendance also diminishes with age, from 9.4% (men) and 9.7% (women) in the 45–54 age group to just 2.4% (men) and 1.0% (women) among those aged 75–84.

Cultural sites attendance

Cultural sites (*e.g.,* historical monuments, museums, art galleries or archaeological sites) are the most popular activity across all age groups when considering participation at least once annually. Participation starts at 40.2% (men) and 40.5% (women) for those aged 45–54 and declines gradually to 17.5% (men) and 13.2% (women) for the 75–84 group. A similar downward trend is observed for more frequent visits (at least four times a year), with participation decreasing from 15.2% (men) and 15.1% (women) in the 45–54 age group to 5.3% (men) and 4.3% (women) among those aged 75–84.

Sports events attendance

Sports events show the largest gender gap. Men attend more, especially in younger age groups - 36.5% of men aged 45–54 attend at least once a year, compared to 20.8% of women. This gap persists even in frequent attendance, with 19.2% of men and only 10.2% of women in the same age group attending four or more times annually. By age 75–84, participation drops sharply, particularly among women (0.6% attending frequently vs. 5.6% of men).

1.5.3 Existing national or regional policies supporting dementia-inclusive cultural institutions

In 2016, a working group was established under the Coordination of the National Health Service Reform for Integrated Continuing Care. This initiative led to the development of the document "*Bases para a Definição de Políticas Públicas na Área das Demências*" (*Foundations for the Definition of Public Policies in the Field of Dementia)* (Portal SNS, 2017).

Recognising the importance of dementia-inclusive policies, the Portuguese Health Ministry approved the Health Strategy for Dementia on June 19, 2018 (*Act of the Minister of Health No. 5988/2018*) (Saúde - Gabinete do Secretário de Estado Adjunto e da Saúde, 2018). This strategy resulted from an agreement between the Secretary of State Assistant for Health, Professor Fernando Araújo, and Alzheimer Portugal. It aligns with recommendations outlined in the document *Foundations for the Definition of Public Policies in the Field of Dementia*, co-developed by Alzheimer Portugal (Serviço Nacional de Saúde, no date). The strategy defines principles of care for people with dementia, emphasising: prevention and early detection, access to clinical and comprehensive diagnosis, therapeutic interventions at primary, hospital, and specialised care levels, and ethical principles, proximity, availability, equity, and continuity in dementia care.

Decree No. 5988/2018 of 19 June not only approved the *National Dementia Strategy* (*Estratégia da Saúde na Área das Demências*), but also established the *National Health Plan for Dementia* (*Plano Nacional da Saúde na Área das Demências*), along with its coordination structure (Saúde - Gabinete do Secretário de Estado Adjunto e da Saúde, 2018). The plan includes measures such as awareness and literacy campaigns at the local level and training for professionals and informal caregivers.

The *National Health Plan for Dementia* is composed of *Regional Health Plans for Dementia* (*Plano Regional de Saúde para as Demências*). In 2021, five Regional Health Administrations (*Administrações Regionais de Saúde, I.P.*) approved their respective plans, leading to the creation of the Executive Committee for the National Health Plan for Dementia (Ministério da Saúde, 2021).

One noteworthy initiative is included in the Regional Plan for Lisboa and Vale do Tejo region. A pilot programme in Sintra mapped local initiatives supporting active ageing, including Senior Academies and Universities and the *Sintra + Saúde* programme, which provides sociocultural activities and health information. Although cultural prescriptions are not explicitly included in the Regional Plan, these initiatives were highlighted at a regional mental health event, where a Mental Health Network website was proposed to inform the public about available activities and partners (ARSLVT, 2019).

The PRR C01-i03 “Completion of the Mental Health Reform and Implementation of the Dementia Strategy” aims to strengthen the Portuguese National Health Service (SNS) under the Resilience and Recovery Plan, and improve responses to mental health needs (Recuperar Portugal, no date). As part of this initiative, the following actions are anticipated:

- Implementing Regional Dementia Health Plans and fostering intersectoral collaboration for people with dementia, their families, and caregivers
- Community integration of psychiatric hospital patients and individuals in religious institutions through the creation of residential support services,
- Expanding local mental health services, covering inpatient, outpatient, and community-based interventions,
- Increasing the number of places in the National Network for Integrated Continuing Care for mental health patients,
- Adapting healthcare and social responses to better serve individuals with dementia, their families, and caregivers.

Although Regional Dementia Plans reference artistic and cultural spaces, they are not explicitly recognised in the National Strategy or National Plan. This omission may indicate that the potential benefits of arts and culture in dementia care are not sufficiently considered. Gonçalves-Pereira *et al.* (2021) stressed that "we need more efficient, evidence-based dementia policies".

Although not dementia-specific, the Porto Santo Charter recommends that cultural institutions improve accessibility by considering the specific needs of individuals and communities (*e.g.*, physical sensory or intellectual disabilities, mobility, ethnicity,) and engage with communities beyond institutional settings to reach excluded audiences. The Porto Santo Charter serves as a guiding framework for policymakers, cultural organisations, and citizens in shaping a new paradigm of cultural democracy in Europe (A Conferência do Porto Santo, 2021).

1.5.4 Public discourse

Public stigma remains a persistent and pervasive challenge for individuals living with dementia. This stigma arises when the general public - and at times even healthcare professionals - hold prejudiced attitudes towards people with dementia, leading to discriminatory behaviours and social exclusion. Stigmatising portrayals that depict individuals with dementia as frail, elderly, or as "empty shells" contribute to a hopeless narrative. These portrayals can reinforce negative stereotypes, including the perception that people with dementia are a danger to themselves or others, which in turn fosters fear, misunderstanding, and social avoidance (Baptista, 2023; Evans-Lacko *et al.*, 2024).

Such discrimination significantly undermines the well-being, autonomy, and social inclusion of those affected. According to the World Alzheimer Report (Evans-Lacko *et al.*, 2024), 36% of individuals with dementia leave employment prematurely due to stigma; 29% withdraw from close personal relationships; and 24% avoid seeking medical care or support services out of concern for mistreatment. Furthermore, 22% report avoiding financial institutions such as banks due to fear of judgment, and 31% refrain from participating in social situations entirely.

The stigma also deeply impacts caregivers, often leading to social isolation and emotional stress. The same report notes that 43% of caregivers stop inviting friends to their homes, concerned about how their loved ones may be treated. Additionally, 47% turn down social invitations, 40% withdraw from community activities, 34% avoid going out in public with the person they care for, and 41% refrain from travelling or taking holidays due to fears of stigmatisation or misunderstanding.

In Portugal, the impact of stigma on both individuals with dementia and their caregiver is recognised at the policy level. The *Diário da República* (Ministério da Saúde, 2018) *recognises* dementia not only as a clinical and personal condition but also as a growing socio-economic challenge with significant implications for families and communities. This issue was consistently highlighted by the experts interviewed, who identified stigma as one of the main barriers to the effective inclusion of people with dementia in cultural activities. Cultural mediators, programme organisers, and directors of museums and other cultural institutions must be made aware of

these biases and actively work to counteract them, ensuring more inclusive and respectful engagement.

1.5.5 Availability of training and educational offers for involving people with dementia in cultural practices

Most of the training and educational opportunities identified were offered by Alzheimer Portugal. The association's website provides a wide range of resources and support materials that showcase available programmes aimed at involving people with dementia in cultural activities and their caregivers.

The association provides two creative and pedagogical digital tools for people with dementia, both of which are offered free of charge to each member: ***O Livro da Vida*** ("The Book of Life") and ***Caixa de Memórias*** ("Memories Box"). These tools aim to create enjoyable moments between individuals with dementia and their caregivers through stimulating activities that make use of reminiscence. They also gather the life history of the individual, ensuring that, even in cases where cognitive changes reduce their ability to express themselves, the person continues to be "heard" and respected, among other benefits (Alzheimer Portugal, n. d.). In 2020, Alzheimer Portugal also developed a set of activities specifically designed for weekly use during the COVID-19 pandemic, aimed at meeting the needs of individuals with dementia. This initiative, called ***Cadernos de Estimulação e Criatividade*** (Stimulus and Creativity Notebooks), is a collection of engaging activities for caregivers to use with people living with dementia. The notebooks are designed to stimulate various cognitive functions while fostering creativity, imagination, and moments of well-being. The notebooks are available in two versions, with different levels of difficulty: version 1 (easier) and version 2 (intermediate). The activities are structured to be completed daily, either in print or as a digital guide. Examples of exercises include completing missing words from the Portuguese national anthem, identifying animals, copying drawings, and engaging with short stories and texts that evoke memories, such as recalling Portugal's first talk show (Alzheimer Portugal, 2020).

Another initiative is the ***Café Memória*** *(Memory Cafe)*, a concept implemented in various countries worldwide. In Portugal, it is led by Alzheimer Portugal and Sonae Sierra, with support from several institutional partners. The *Café Memória* provides a welcoming space for individuals experiencing memory problems or dementia, as well as their families and caregivers, to share experiences and offer mutual support under the guidance of healthcare o social care professionals. The sessions are structured yet informal and non-clinical, contributing to an improved quality of life and reduced social isolation. Each session begins with a personalised welcome for participants, followed by a presentation on a relevant topic by a guest speaker or an interactive activity. A coffee break is also included, fostering social interaction and strengthening connections among attendees. These gatherings encourage interaction among people with similar experiences while engaging participants in enjoyable and stimulating activities. The environment is safe and supportive, offering both emotional support and practical information. This initiative is free of charge, does not require prior registration, and takes place monthly in several cities across Portugal, from North to South (Alzheimer Portugal, no date b).

The ***Rede MID - Museus para a Inclusão na Demência*** (Museum Network for Dementia-Friendly Inclusion) is an informal initiative that emerged due to the recognition of the limited offerings for people living with dementia and their caregivers in museums. The main objectives of this network, now consisting of 12 partner organisations, are to foster the development and sharing of best practices between partners and provide training for cultural institutions on how to engage with people with dementia. The network also aims to collaborate with Alzheimer Portugal and Acesso Cultura to develop general recommendations for creating dementia-friendly cultural experiences and to produce a best practices manual to disseminate knowledge and promote the adoption of effective strategies for engaging people with dementia in cultural activities (Alzheimer Portugal, 2023).

Finally, the online support and training programme called ***iSupport*** should be highlighted. It is designed to provide informal caregivers with a useful tool, as well as to develop research that can be utilised for the benefit of informal caregivers of people with dementia. The Portuguese iSupport programme was adapted from the iSupport for Dementia, Version 1.0, developed by the World Health Organization in 2018. This programme was adapted and translated. The use of iSupport-Portugal is free of charge and can be accessed via computer, mobile phone, or tablet at times, locations, and days most convenient for the user. The programme consists of 23 sessions divided into five thematic modules. It covers various aspects of caregiving, including an introduction to dementia, strategies for improving communication, supported decision-making, and involving others. It also addresses self-care for carers by focusing on stress reduction and making time for enjoyable activities, guidance on providing daily care, and approaches to managing behavioural changes. All sessions of the programme can be completed, or users can select the sessions most relevant to their needs and interests (World Health Organization, 2019).

1.6 Challenges of people living with dementia, informal caregivers and stakeholders in the cultural sector

The interviews revealed a variety of **challenges faced by people living with dementia, their informal caregivers, and cultural sector stakeholders**, which differ depending on the individual's condition as well as logistical and structural factors influencing cultural participation.

Among informal caregivers, one prominent challenge is the **varied needs depending on the condition** of the person being cared for. For example, one caregiver highlighted the importance of patience and time when supporting his wife. Although she occasionally resists participation, she generally recognises its benefits and eventually takes part. For him, maintaining social stimulation is more crucial than the specific content of activities. While fatigue often poses a significant obstacle, her enthusiasm and willingness to engage remain strong.

Another challenge relates to the **way care is approached**, as noted by Ana Rita Silva, neuropsychologist and Assistant Professor at the University of Coimbra: "Many informal caregivers rely on ready-made solutions and formal care. Initially, they see it as something positive because it offers them a break, but they often don't fully recognise the value of non-pharmacological approaches. Our system remains heavily focused on curing. When the outcome is well-being and dignity, it is often perceived as insufficient. [...] It is essential to

educate people about incurable diseases in older adults". This issue is also reflected in the experience shared by Diana Pereira, Pereira, who described the initial efforts to establish collaboration between the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and local healthcare centres through social prescribing:
"We began exploring collaboration with local healthcare centres, where doctors would refer certain patients to our programme. However, organising group sessions proved challenging and the experience highlighted the importance of continuing to test and adapt new ways of reaching those who could benefit most".

Another major challenge is **mobility and logistical barriers**. One caregiver described his wife's reduced mobility as the main difficulty, making outings impossible without external assistance. He pointed to the urgent need for state support to adapt their vehicle for wheelchair access and help with the certification and acquisition of an adapted car - processes he finds overwhelming and difficult to navigate.

There is also a clear **need for domestic and financial support** among caregivers. One caregiver expressed a desire for regular domestic help, including meal preparation and household organisation. Despite some assistance, he struggles with even basic administrative tasks and anticipates requiring full-time help in the future. Similarly, another caregiver underscored the importance of logistical and financial aid, especially for accessible transportation, along with guidance in accessing these resources.

Experts also identified several key challenges. A frequently mentioned issue is **human resource constraints**, which limit the effective implementation of dementia-friendly initiatives in cultural institutions. For example, the "EU no musEU" project requires more volunteers to serve as formal caregivers - individuals who accompany people living with dementia during sessions. There is also a need for increased funding to hire artists and facilitators. While larger institutions may have greater financial flexibility, they often depend on outsourcing artists. As Virgínia Morais Gomes, project coordinator of EU no musEU at the Museu Nacional Machado de Castro, noted: "What's needed to make these projects viable is a network that enables mutual exchange. For example, we could offer specialised training in return. Trainers from different fields could, in exchange, access a pool of experts - such as artists, musicians, or actors. Music and theatre, in particular, are especially valuable for this type of work".

Another barrier is **limited engagement with care centres**. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has been directing its programme towards care centres and has encountered some resistance. Reasons identified by the interviewees may include a lack of motivation or recognition of the benefits by professional staff, insufficient human resources, accessibility challenges, and/or logistical difficulties.

Experts further pointed out **socio-economic and stigma-related barriers** that may affect participation. Cultural spaces can feel less welcoming or accessible to individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Finally, the **need for training and stigma reduction** was repeatedly emphasised. There is a significant gap in specific training for professional caregivers and cultural mediators regarding dementia and the impact of stigma. Raising awareness and improving knowledge is crucial to

fostering inclusive environments. Experts stressed the importance of changing perceptions and attitudes towards people living with dementia, advocating for approaches grounded in respect, empathy, and dignity.

1.7 Examples of best practices in Dementia-Friendly Cultural Spaces

1.7.1 Rede MID - Museus para a Inclusão na Demência; Coimbra, Lisboa, Viseu, Pombal

Type – Cultural network

Primary objectives and goals of the practice – As a network of museums committed to fostering a more inclusive environment for people living with dementia, its mission is to promote autonomy, well-being, dignity, and quality of life for individuals with dementia and their caregivers. This is achieved by strengthening social and cultural participation and reinforcing interpersonal bonds. The network also seeks to raise awareness among cultural institution teams about the importance of developing specific responses tailored to the needs of people with dementia and their caregivers. In doing so, it empowers these teams to act as agents of change, contributing to a more inclusive society and actively challenging the stigma surrounding dementia.



Figure 1 – Rede MID logo (https://alzheimerportugal.org/redemid/)

How does the practice create inclusive opportunities for people with dementia? - This practice actively promotes the participation of individuals with dementia and their caregivers in cultural activities specifically designed to meet their unique needs and preferences, ensuring accessibility and comfort. Additionally, it develops and implements activities that provide cognitive, sensory, and creative stimulation, along with opportunities for social interaction.

Key stakeholders involved and their role in supporting the initiative - Acesso Cultura, Alzheimer Portugal, Centro de Arte Moderna da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Jardim Botânico da Universidade de Coimbra, MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra, Museu de Lisboa – EGEAC, Museu Municipal de Pombal, Museu Nacional Grão Vasco – DGPC, Museu Nacional Machado de Castro – DGPC, *Museu Tesouro da Misericórdia de Viseu - SCMV .*

Required skills, resources, or infrastructure - To ensure the quality and sustainability of dementia-friendly cultural participation initiatives, museums seeking to join this network must demonstrate a strong commitment to key requirements. They should respect the fundamental rights of individuals with dementia and their caregivers, aligning with the core objectives of the network. A clear programme implementation plan is essential, outlining the activities, resources, and evaluation methods. Museums should also actively promote community awareness and stigma reduction, fostering greater understanding and inclusion. Additionally, they must

allocate a dedicated team and provide the necessary infrastructure, including accessible venues, appropriate resources and trained staff, to ensure effective programme delivery and evaluation.

Sources or references for further information

Documento Fundador MID

https://alzheimerportugal.org/o-que-e-a-rede-mid-rede-nacional-de-museus-para-a-inclusao-na-demencia/

1.7.2 EU no musEU, Coimbra and Viseu

Type **-** Cultural activity

Primary objectives and goals of the practice **-** Provide cognitive stimulation that enhances well-being and improves the quality of life for individuals affected by dementia. Facilitate non-formal education for caregivers through engagement with art, scientific content, and cultural enrichment, thereby promoting active and healthy aging. Foster citizenship and social inclusion for both individuals with dementia and their caregivers.

Figure 2 - EU no MusEU logo (https://alzheimerportugal.org/programa-eu-no-museu-2/)

How does the practice create inclusive opportunities for people with dementia? **-** The "EU no musEU" project enables individuals with dementia to connect with their personal life stories and find reflections of themselves and their memories through the museum's artworks and spaces.

Who implements the practice? **-** Approximately 20 to 25 volunteers annually, including formal caregivers in session and individuals supporting activity preparation and other logistical aspects. Facilitation of the sessions is led by a team of seven permanent staff members with expertise in various fields. The programme also incorporates sessions led by external specialists and thematic exhibitions.

Structure of the initiative, including its content, duration, location, and frequency **-** Monthly sessions for individuals with cognitive impairment along the Alzheimer's Disease spectrum and their caregivers. As Graça Marcelino, one of the museum mediators and programme practitioners explains: "The great advantage of this programme is its continuity over time. Time softens everything... As we get to know people better, and they get to know us too, through these monthly activities... And that's perfect for us, and also for the participants."

Specific methods used **-** A person-centred methodology is used to facilitate cognitive and cultural stimulation. This approach centres on the appreciation and reflective engagement with artworks, museum spaces, and scientific, ethnographic, or anthropological content, fostering a dialogue with participants' personal life stories. These methods are further enhanced by

incorporating interventions from various artistic disciplines. This multi-faceted approach ensures a meaningful and transformative experience.

Key stakeholders involved and their role in supporting the initiative **-** APOJOVI/APOSENIOR Association; AMIC - Friends League of the Machado de Castro National Museum; Neurology Service of the Coimbra Hospital and University Center (CHUC); Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Coimbra (FPCEUC); Center for Neuroscience and Cell Biology of the University of Coimbra (CNC.IBILI, UC).

Outcomes of the initiative, both measurable and anecdotal **-** Interest in continuing the programme has been reaffirmed by the retention rate of participants (60%). Caregivers have been the main advocates for its continuity and for the implementation of increasingly creative interventions.

Feedback from participants or carers **-** Caregiver: "I run out of words to thank and express the pleasure of learning so much from all of 'our' people!".

Potential for replication or scaling – "EU no musEU" (ME in the musEUm) adapted its strategies and routines to different local contexts and realities, to other content of host museums, and to varying average education levels of participants.

Sources or references for further information:

https://alzheimerportugal.org/programa-eu-no-museu-2/

https://www.patrimonio.pt/post/eu-no-museu-acessibilidade-integrada-com-pessoas-com-dem%C3%AAncia-e-seus-cuidadores

1.7.3 Marcar o Lugar - Encontros no Museu, Lisboa

Type **-** Cultural activity

Primary objectives and goals of the practice **-** Establish a replicable model for artistic and cultural engagement programmes designed to benefit individuals living with dementia and their caregivers within a museum setting.

Structure of the initiative, including its content, duration, location, and frequency **-** Two-part approach: first, participants engage in the direct observation and appreciation of artistic objects related to predetermined themes, fostering exploration of the connections between these objects and individual perspectives and experiences; second, participants create original artistic works inspired by the themes.



Figure 3 - Session of "Marcar o Lugar" (https://www.ccb.pt/programa-marcar-o-lugar-encontros-no-museu/)

Specific methods used **-** Six weekly sessions, each lasting approximately two hours, for small groups of people with dementia and their caregivers. Key themes are explored, likely to foster greater participant engagement, such as cultures and traditions, spaces and places, identity, everyday objects and life habits, interpersonal relationships, and established bonds.

Key stakeholders involved and their role in supporting the initiative **-** This project is the result of a co-creation process that brings together all the project's stakeholders: Alzheimer Portugal Association, museum cultural mediators, artists, and participants – people living with dementia and their formal and informal carers. The project also benefitted from the collaboration of the Catholic University of Portugal in its evaluation, the results of which helped assess the impact of these programmes on their target audience, as well as identify the key elements to be incorporated into future initiatives. Taking into account that *"Marcar o Lugar – Encontros no Museu"* has, as one of its main objectives, the aim of fostering a richer and more sensory experience throughout its entire journey, the project is supported by the brand: A Vida Portuguesa. It is worth highlighting the implementation of seat reservation systems. This initiative was piloted by MAAT and the Museum of Lisbon, both partners of the MID Network, and is also being implemented by the CCB (Centro Cultural de Belém).

Outcomes of the initiative, both measurable and anecdotal / Feedback from participants or carers **-** The programme showed an improvement in the bonds between the person with dementia and their caregiver, as well as the development of new relationships, increased participation, and social inclusion of its participants.

Long-term benefits or lessons learned **-** According to the results obtained in the pilot programmes, there was evidence of improved mood and well-being of participants, as well as a significant improvement in the quality of life of people with dementia.

Is the practice ongoing or completed? **-** To date, four pilot programmes have been conducted between 2020 and 2022. The pilot museums that implemented this model were MAAT and the Museum of Lisbon.

Potential for replication or scaling. **-** The created model was intended to be sufficiently broad to be used according to each museum's collection and different artistic languages (image, text, sound, and movement), but flexible enough to allow participants' interests and preferences to shape the experience. Therefore, each programme is adjusted to the needs and particularities of each group.

Sources or references for further information, if available.

https://alzheimerportugal.org/marcarolugar/

https://www.ccb.pt/programa-marcar-o-lugar-encontros-no-museu/

https://alzheimerportugal.org/museu-de-lisboa-marcar-o-lugar/

https://acessocultura.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/101_pt.pdf

1.7.4 Pela Arte Restaurar Memórias, Desenhar Sorrisos, Porto

Type **-** Cultural activity

Primary objectives and goals of the practice **-** It aims to facilitate access to the arts for people with dementia, promote their social integration, cognitively stimulate participants, strengthen their social skills and relationships between them and their family members. It also aims to provide a shared experience in a safe environment.



Figure 4 – Session "Pela Arte Restaurar Memórias" (https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/124622/2/369528.pdf)

Structure of the initiative, including its content, duration, location, and frequency **-** This consists of 17 weekly sessions at the museum, half of which are guided tours of selected artworks, and the other half are sessions in the educational service workshop. Both types of sessions were guided by the aforementioned museum specialists in audiences with Special Educational Needs.

Key stakeholders involved and their role in supporting the initiative **-** A protocol was established between Hospital Magalhães Lemos and the National Museum Soares dos Reis, in partnership with the Geriatric Psychiatry outpatient service at Hospital Magalhães Lemos.

Outcomes of the initiative, both measurable and anecdotal **-** A synthesis of statistical data and a summary of the outcomes were prepared. The advantages provided to informal caregivers include knowledge consolidation, aesthetic appreciation, social contact, and recreational activities. Caregivers could take pride in the final result, and the programme has potential for relaxation. While there are many advantages to caregivers, some disadvantages were also present, such as interruption of the course. Caregivers also had advantages such as social contact, sensory stimulation, and an emotional value, as well as cognitive stimulation.

However, disadvantages also exist like physical and environmental discomfort and frustration.

These findings demonstrate that the cultural programmes can yield improvements in many areas of people's lives. However, environmental and physical factors need to be improved.

Sources or references for further information, if available.

https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/bitstream/10216/124622/2/369528.pdf

1.7.5 ReMiND, Porto

Type - Research project and cultural activity

Primary objectives and goals of the practice – ReMiND – Design for People with Dementia is a research project aimed at stimulating the cognitive and sensory abilities of individuals with dementia, while promoting their quality of life and meaningful interaction. Developed in partnership with the University of Lusófona, the project engages students who are trained to design playful artefacts tailored to the needs of people with dementia. These students collaborate closely with healthcare professionals and users from a daycare centre operated by Alzheimer Portugal, ensuring that the artefacts are aligned with the interests, preferences, and characteristics of the centre's participants.

Structure of the initiative, including its content, duration, location, and frequency - For four months, the period of the project, the coordinator attended the daycare centre - intending to understand the daily dynamics experienced there; establish a close and trusting relationship with users and care workers, crucial for a more effective response to the needs, aspirations and profile of the group; become familiar with the users, their life history, interests, preferences and aspirations; establish participatory design processes with users and care workers; evaluate the effectiveness of projects at different stages.

Specific methods used - Participant observation, regularly attending the daycare centre and actively joining daily activities such as cognitive and sensory games, creative workshops, group therapies, and social moments. The coordinator also conducted informal and walking interviews with care workers to gather contextual knowledge. After each visit, detailed ethnographic field notes were recorded and later shared with students in anonymised form. A large mind map was created and continuously updated, summarising key information on dementia symptoms, user biographies, life experiences, cultural references, and design opportunities. Additionally, students received specialist training in dementia and art therapies to help them understand the lived experience of dementia.

Key stakeholders involved and their role in supporting the initiative - Researcher in the field of design and dementia, undergraduate design students, people living with moderate to late-stage dementia from a daycare centre run by Alzheimer Portugal and care workers.

***Is the practice ongoing or completed?* -** This project was carried out over a period of 4 months as part of the research ReMiND – *Design for People with Dementia: cultural, contextual, and biographical components in the production of artefacts for cognitive stimulation activities*, in which the project coordinator is involved.

Sources or references for further information, if available.

https://www.ulusofona.pt/en/conversations-about/remind-project-inclusive-design-to-stimulate-people-with-dementia

https://doi.org/10.1080/24735132.2024.2434376



Figure 5 – Presentation of ReMiND project (https://www.ulusofona.pt/en/conversations-about/remind-project-inclusive-design-to-stimulate-people-with-dementia)

1.7.6 iSupport, Portugal

Type **-** Training and support programme for informal caregivers of people with dementia.



Figure 6 – iSupport poster (https://alzheimerportugal.org/isupport-portugal-um-programa-online-para-cuidadores-de-pessoas-com-demencia/)

Primary objectives and goals of the practice **-** To provide education, skills training, and support to informal caregivers of people with dementia, helping them manage stress and improve their well-being while enhancing their caregiving skills.

Structure of the initiative, including its content, duration, location, and frequency **-** The programme is based on the World Health Organisation iSupport programme and consists of five modules with 23 lessons, covering topics such as understanding dementia, caregiving strategies, self-care for caregivers, providing everyday care, and dealing with challenging behaviours. The lessons are designed to be interactive and flexible, allowing caregivers to choose topics based on their needs. It is an online self-help programme, accessible anytime and anywhere.

Specific methods used **-** Interactive exercises, problem-solving techniques, cognitive behavioural therapy strategies (*e.g.,* psychoeducation, behavioural activation, cognitive reframing, relaxation), and culturally adapted case studies.

Key stakeholders involved and their role in supporting the initiative **-** The initiative involved the research team, the Portuguese Alzheimer's Association, an expert panel (including psychologists, gerontologists, and legal professionals), and the World Health Organization (WHO) for fidelity checks and approval of cultural adaptations.

Required skills, resources, or infrastructure **-** Trained professionals for adaptation and evaluation, digital tools for online delivery, interactive learning modules, culturally adapted content, and accessibility considerations for informal caregivers with varying levels of education.

Outcomes of the initiative, both measurable and anecdotal / Feedback from participants or carers **-** Expected outcomes include reduced caregiver stress, improved mental health, increased knowledge and self-efficacy in caregiving, and higher user engagement. The cultural adaptation aimed to enhance comprehension, accessibility, and relevance for Portuguese caregivers.

Long-term benefits or lessons learned **-** The cultural adaptation process highlighted the importance of tailoring content to local contexts, including language, caregiving practices, and available support systems. It also demonstrated the value of stakeholder involvement and expert validation to ensure cultural and technical accuracy.

Is the practice ongoing or completed? **-** The adaptation process has been completed, and the programme is expected to be implemented and tested for usability, acceptability, and effectiveness in the Portuguese context.

Potential for replication or scaling. **-** The methodology used for cultural adaptation provides a model that can be replicated in other countries looking to implement iSupport in their local contexts, ensuring culturally sensitive and accessible support for caregivers worldwide.

Sources or references for further information, if available.

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32151166/

https://alzheimerportugal.org/isupport-portugal-um-programa-online-para-cuidadores-de-pessoas-com-demencia/

1.8 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the conducted desk research and on the interviews carried out with experts, cultural professionals, and caregivers.

1.8.1 Accessibility and inclusivity for individuals with dementia within cultural spaces

Inclusive design of cultural spaces

To ensure cultural spaces are accessible to people living with dementia (PLwD), the following adaptations are recommended:

- **Sensory-friendly environments**: Avoid harsh lighting, loud noises, strong colours, and echoing acoustics. Use soft lighting, reduce glare, and incorporate high-contrast surfaces to enhance visual perception (Waterhouse, Premier and Boarin, 2022).
- **Intimate and familiar spaces**: Small, quiet settings with minimal stimuli are preferred. For example, showing just one artwork per room can reduce confusion.

Trained and empathetic staff

- Staff in cultural institutions must be trained to develop tailored, person-centred responses for PLwD and their caregivers.
- Empower staff to act as inclusive change agents and help reduce stigma (Alzheimer Portugal, 2022b; Quattrini *et al.*, 2024).

Inclusive programming and participation

- Encourage co-creation and participatory design, allowing individuals with dementia and their caregivers to help shape cultural activities (Lima, 2024).
- Define clear inclusion/exclusion criteria for participants. While this may mean that some individuals are not included in certain activities, it helps to ensure that no one is exposed to situations that could increase anxiety or distress. At the same time, it guarantees that those who do participate are supported appropriately and can benefit fully from the experience. For example, inclusion criteria may involve the ability to engage in group settings; practical considerations, such as placing participants with hearing difficulties closer to the facilitator, should also be considered to enhance accessibility and comfort.

Empathetic communication practices

- In order to promote understanding, reduce anxiety, and enhance participation, cultural mediators should:
    - Speak slowly and clearly;
    - Use gestures and visual aids;
    - Offer simplified information;
    - Allow ample time for responses.

Reducing stigma and promoting public awareness

- Public campaigns and anti-stigma communication strategies should be promoted to challenge stereotypes and structural stigma (Evans-Lacko *et al.*, 2024).

Institutional collaboration and networking

- Build networks of cultural institutions (*e.g.*, Rede MiD) to share good practices, co-develop training programmes, and strengthen inclusive efforts (Alzheimer Portugal, 2022b)

1.8.2 Educational content needed to train cultural staff, carers, and artists

Understanding dementia

- Cover different stages, symptoms, and their impacts on behaviour, cognition, and communication.

Stigma awareness

- Raise awareness of how stigma affects PLwD and their carers. Promote advocacy within institutions. As one interviewee from Santa Casa da Misericórdia said, Ana Costa, *"It is important to have a dementia that is de-dramatised and colourful".*

Person-centred methodologies

- Activities should be adapted to the individual's preferences, life history, and dementia stage. *Examples: "Marcar o Lugar – Encontros no Museu" uses pre-session caregiver surveys; "EU no musEU" applies life-story methods.*

Empathic communication techniques

- Key skills include:
    - Active listening;
    - Slower speaking pace;
    - Use of fewer and simpler questions;
    - Avoiding "elderspeak";
    - Emotional validation and non-verbal tools (*e.g.*, sensory objects, art reproductions);
    - Use of humour and creativity;
    - Emphasis on creating a safe, inclusive space with no "wrong answers".

Inclusive artistic practice

- Focus on emotional connection rather than artistic output or technique.
- Avoid infantilisation while keeping the content engaging and meaningful.
- Use sensory and non-verbal components such as touch, movement, and sound, to engage participants who are not able to communicate verbally.

Whole-team involvement

- One interviewee highlighted that awareness-raising and training should reach all levels of staff, from cultural mediators to institutional leadership, to ensure a shared understanding and collective commitment to inclusive cultural engagement.

1.8.3 Training methods and formats

Some experts interviewed recommended focusing cultural activities on individuals in the **mild to moderate stages** of dementia. However, research by Regier, Hodgson and Gitlin (2017) highlights that **arts and crafts activities can be adapted** across different stages of dementia by considering the cognitive abilities associated with each stage (see Table 4).

For individuals in the **mild stage**, activities can be more complex and stimulating, often including multiple steps, goals, sequencing, and opportunities for problem-solving. These individuals are typically more independent and can engage in structured, goal-oriented tasks.

At the **moderate stage**, cognitive challenges increase, so activities should be simplified. They may no longer be goal-oriented and should involve no more than two steps. Repetition becomes important to support engagement and understanding.

For those in the **severe stage**, activities should be very simple and focus on basic movements or manipulation. These are not goal-oriented and are typically limited to a single step, requiring close supervision and support.

Table 4 – Characteristics of activities for persons with dementia at the mild, moderate and severe stages (retrieved from (Regier, Hodgson and Gitlin, 2017))

Stage	Characteristics
Mild dementia	- Goal-oriented - Multi-step - Sequencing - Problem-solving - Greater independence
Moderate dementia	- May not be goal-oriented - No more than two steps - Repetition
Severe dementia	- Not goal-oriented - Single step - Simple movement or manipulation - Greater oversight

One caregiver interviewed proposed the **creation of differentiated groups** based on participants' cognitive stages, allowing for more tailored stimulation, especially for those with higher levels of autonomy.

Inclusive methods and non-verbal engagement

Inclusive and adaptive approaches are essential to ensure **individuals can participate**, regardless of their communication abilities or cognitive level. Activities should be:

- **Structured but flexible**, to avoid overwhelming participants;
- **Aligned with individual interests and preferences**;
- **Scheduled according to daily rhythms**, acknowledging that cognitive functioning may vary throughout the day.

Even individuals who are non-verbal can actively engage through **non-verbal and sensory-based activities**. These can stimulate memory, support emotional well-being, and reinforce a sense of identity and inclusion.

Examples of inclusive activity types:

- Music and rhythm;
- Movement and dance;
- Tactile and sensory engagement (*e.g.,* using fabrics, clay, or natural materials);
- Observation followed by simple creative responses (*e.g.,* painting inspired by viewing artworks or engaging in guided reflection on a specific piece);
- Storytelling and memory-sharing through photos or personal objects.

As one interviewee noted, **creativity among cultural mediators is very important**. An example was shared in which a person, previously bedridden, began to walk again after engaging with a virtual reality experience of birds and nature sounds, highlighting the transformative potential of sensory and immersive artistic engagement.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Since 2011, dementia-friendly initiatives within artistic and cultural institutions in Portugal have become more frequent. However, they remain largely insufficient according to Alzheimer Portugal. Many institutions are still unprepared to deliver dementia-specific programming, and rural areas are particularly underrepresented. Moreover, even though Regional Dementia Plans reference artistic and cultural spaces, they are not explicitly recognised in the National Strategy or National Plan.

Despite this lack of formal recognition, such initiatives have demonstrated clear and meaningful benefits. Engagement with the arts - whether through creation, observation, or sensory experiences, and across diverse media such as painting, sculpture, dance, music, theatre, etc. - enables people living with dementia (PLwD) to experience enhanced well-being, express themselves, and build meaningful social connections.

However, barriers to participation have been identified. Individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds may feel alienated or perceive cultural spaces as intimidating or unwelcoming. In addition, both professional and informal caregivers may not always recognise the value of cultural engagement or may face logistical challenges such as mobility limitations, time constraints, or lack of accessible transport.

Projects such as “EU no musEU”, “Marcar o Lugar – Encontros no Museu”, “Pela Arte Restaurar Memórias”, and others have demonstrated promising results. Insights from interviews with psychologists, cultural professionals, and museum mediators highlight the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between cultural staff and dementia experts. These interviews also revealed the nuanced benefits of different session formats. Mixed sessions, involving both PLwD and their caregivers, help to create more balanced dynamics, improve communication, and strengthen emotional bonds. Separate sessions, meanwhile, offer informal caregivers the chance to build peer connections and support networks that can extend beyond the activities themselves.

A key takeaway from these initiatives, particularly for the development of training materials, is the central role of the relationship between the cultural mediator or artist and the person living with dementia. Effective training should include a robust understanding of dementia, empathetic communication techniques, and strategies for reducing stigma, which remains a significant barrier. Furthermore, careful consideration of environmental factors (such as lighting, acoustics, and time of day) as well as any additional impairments the person living with dementia may experience, is essential to creating inclusive and welcoming spaces where individuals feel comfortable, respected, and able to participate meaningfully.

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