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Skills Training And Growth through Erasmus+ Theatre

Report on Theatre Professionals' Interviews – CONIL CAMP

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1. Introduction

The STAGE-T project focuses on theatre as a powerful instrument for adult education, inclusion, and community engagement. As part of Work Package 2, Conil Camp conducted structured interviews with Romanian theatre professionals to identify personal experiences, perceived benefits, and systemic challenges in theatre-based learning.

The purpose of this report is to summarize insights gathered from **renowned actors, directors, and playwrights**, each with extensive careers in performing arts. Their reflections highlight the transformative role of theatre not only as an artistic field but also



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as a **social and educational practice** capable of strengthening empathy, dialogue, and personal development.

2. Methodology

Interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire, including:

- demographic data,
- professional background,
- reflections on the role of theatre in personal and social development,
- observations on inclusion and barriers,
- perspectives on technology,
- recommendations to engage wider audiences.

All interviews followed a **semi-structured format**, allowing professionals to elaborate on lived experiences while providing comparable insights. Responses were analyzed through a **thematic qualitative approach**, identifying recurring ideas across multiple interviewees.

A total of **ten Romanian professionals** were interviewed; all are currently active in theatre and have experience across different formats, including state theatre, independent theatre, experimental productions, and community projects.

3. Profile Overview of Interviewed Professionals

The interviewees represent **highly experienced individuals**, with **20–40+ years of professional activity**, including:

- actors,
- directors,



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- playwrights,
- educators,
- cultural leaders.

All professionals:

- have higher education in theatre (UNATC or similar institutions),
- work full-time in artistic environments,
- have participated in **dozens of productions** (between 40–100+ shows),
- have collaborated both nationally and internationally.

Their range of experience provides a **credible and diverse perspective** of theatre practice and education in Romania.

4. Theatre as a Space for Inclusion and Diversity

Across interviews, participants expressed a deep belief that theatre **naturally creates conditions for inclusion**. Artists described theatre as:

- *“a language for what cannot be expressed otherwise”,*
- *“a place where diverse experiences meet”,*
- *“a safe space for emotional and social exploration”.*

Professionals emphasized that theatre:

- brings together people from different backgrounds,
- reduces barriers through shared emotional experience,
- offers visibility to marginalized voices,
- fosters empathy and human connection,
- narrows generational gaps.

However, interviewees also acknowledged that inclusion is not automatic; systemic barriers continue to impact access and representation, particularly for:



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- individuals from rural environments,
- low-income communities,
- artists with disabilities,
- ethnic minorities.

These barriers are described as **structural**, relating to funding, education, and limited opportunities for early artistic involvement.

5. Theatre as a Tool for Personal Growth and Emotional Development

One dominant theme was the **personal transformation** experienced through theatre. Professionals highlighted a wide spectrum of skills developed through their artistic journey, including:

- emotional intelligence,
- self-awareness and confidence,
- adaptability and resilience,
- critical thinking,
- leadership and collaboration,
- public speaking and communication,
- active listening,
- problem-solving in real time,
- creativity and imagination,
- managing pressure and uncertainty.

Many artists described theatre as their “**life’s greatest teacher**”, explaining that all major personal milestones were influenced by stage experiences.

Interviewees consistently linked theatre with:

- identity formation,



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- courage to explore difficult emotions,
- deeper understanding of the human condition,
- discovering personal voice and agency.

Young audiences were highlighted as the most receptive to the developmental benefits of theatre, as they are in a stage of exploring identity, values, and social behavior.

6. Social Connections and Community Building in Theatre

Theatre professionals unanimously stressed the **collective nature** of theatre creation. Long-term friendships and professional collaborations, lasting **15–40 years**, were frequently mentioned as the most valuable outcomes of a life in theatre.

All interviewees described theatre as:

- a collaboration-based environment,
- a community built through shared vulnerability,
- a context that demands trust, communication, and empathy,
- a space where interpersonal relationships become profound.

The rehearsal room was repeatedly described as “**a family**”, “a tribe”, or “a community of trust”.

Theatre not only enables **social skill development** for young performers but is also a powerful tool for **adult socialization**, especially in inclusive, community-based projects.



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7. Barriers and Challenges in Social Theatre

Despite its potential, professionals identified several **systemic challenges** affecting theatre today, especially regarding inclusion and accessibility:

- **lack of funding**, especially for independent and experimental work,
- **limited cultural policy vision** and unstable support systems,
- **insufficient access** for marginalized communities,
- **lack of promotion and visibility** for local productions,
- **economic barriers** to theatre education,
- **elitist perceptions** regarding who “belongs” in theatre,
- **competition instead of collaboration**, especially in institutional contexts.

Digital culture and fast entertainment consumption (screens, streaming) also reduce attention spans and make it more difficult to attract younger audiences to live performance.

8. Recommendations for Greater Engagement

Professionals proposed several **practical solutions** for expanding theatre’s role in education and inclusion:

Educational and community initiatives

- community-based theatre labs open to all ages,
- workshops focused on personal development through acting,
- intergenerational theatre projects,
- theatre residencies in rural or underprivileged areas,
- partnerships between schools, NGOs, and theatres,
- mobile theatre platforms and flexible performance spaces.



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Access and communication

- free or low-cost introductory courses,
- improved promotion of local shows (online platforms, social media),
- decentralizing culture beyond major cities,
- inclusive leadership models in institutions,
- mentoring systems for emerging artists.

All participants agreed that **everyone should experience theatre**, either as an audience member or as an active creator.

9. Theatre, Technology and the Future

Professionals see technology as both an opportunity and a challenge.

While most are **not afraid of artificial intelligence**, they warn that technology should **support artistic creation rather than replace it**.

Key reflections include:

- theatre offers live emotional impact that cannot be replicated digitally,
- screens lack the “shared energy” between audience and performer,
- technology can enhance stagecraft (sound, visuals), but not the **human essence** of theatre,
- AI might influence content production, but **cannot replace lived emotional experience**.

The future of theatre depends on maintaining its **human core**, while embracing tools that increase accessibility, without losing authenticity.



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10. Conclusions

Interviews conducted under the STAGE-T project confirm that theatre is a unique social and educational tool capable of developing:

- emotional and interpersonal skills,
- empathy and social cohesion,
- confidence and self-expression,
- community engagement,
- critical thinking and dialogue.

Professionals with decades of experience describe theatre as **a lifelong journey**, where learning never ends and where personal and collective transformation happens simultaneously.

Despite structural challenges, particularly funding and access, artists believe firmly in theatre's capacity to **include, uplift, and educate**, offering all individuals a space to be seen, heard, and connected.

STAGE-T plays a valuable role in translating this knowledge into **community-based adult learning models**, where theatre becomes a method for empowerment rather than an exclusive artistic field.