

# Cultural inclusion of people with dementia

Per Senectute Austria

## Everyone has a right to cultural participation

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to participate in scientific advancement and its benefits."*

This means that everyone has the right to participate in cultural life. In reality, however, it is not a matter of course for people with dementia and their relatives to participate in cultural life "as before". Our understanding of art and culture, but also our social framework and values, rarely take into account the needs, desires and abilities of people with dementia.

## Structural Violence and Cultural Participation

, *"structural violence is an avoidable impairment of basic human needs, or, more generally, of life, that reduces the real level of need satisfaction below what is potentially possible"* .

Structural violence therefore arises when a social system is structured in such a way that certain people or groups of people cannot participate in all areas of social life or are disadvantaged. This also applies to people with dementia, who are mostly excluded from cultural life due to a lack of offers tailored to their needs.

Fortunately, this is now beginning to change in small steps in Austria as well. Because the awareness of the exclusion and disadvantage of certain groups in cultural life has increased and the first offers for these target groups are being established.

According to estimates by the Austrian Alzheimer Society, around 100,000 people are currently living in Austria with dementia. By 2050, that number will have risen to around 230,000.

*Even if the language fails, the heart never becomes demented. Art reaches our soul, shows us that we can still do a lot.*

(Helga Rohra , author and person with dementia)

## First cultural offers for people with dementia

On the initiative of [Pro Senectute](#), a cultural offer for people with dementia was established and disseminated. These are special museum tours for those affected, their relatives and carers. Senectute employees got to know these "special tours" in the Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne. Touched by the reactions of those affected and their companions and the sensitive and appreciative design, the idea was born to bring this offer to Austria.

In November 2015, Jochen Schmauck -Langer from [dementia+art](#) , who developed this offer, conducted the first further training seminar on the subject of "Cultural Participation for People with Dementia" in Vienna. After the first successful seminar, further training courses followed in Linz and Salzburg.

museum employees from the field of art education, people from the elderly, care and senior sectors are also invited to the seminars . Because in addition to the theoretical and practical examination of the topic, it is also important to us that all participants get to know each other and network.

## Existing offers at Austrian museums

We are very pleased that this initiative has resulted in a range of guided tours for people with dementia and their families in various cities in Austria. Since 2016, there have been guided tours of three museums in Vienna for the first time: the Albertina, the Belvedere and the Kunsthistorisches Museum. In Linz, guided tours are offered in the Lentos, in the art museum, in the state museum and in the city museum Nordico, in Wiener Neustadt in the Museum St. Peter an der Sperr. The Salzburg Museum will start with the first guided tours.

## resource strengthening

The positive effect of this offer can usually be seen on people's faces. And the supervisors also emphasize that these excursions are a special experience for the people themselves. And so we know from the feedback from relatives, carers and the art mediators that this offer is enthusiastically accepted.

# Cultural inclusion of people with dementia

Per Senectute Austria

## Everyone has a right to cultural participation

Article 27 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states that "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its achievements."

This means that everyone has a right to participate in cultural life. In reality, however, it is not a matter of course for people with dementia and their relatives to participate in cultural life "as they used to." Our understanding of art and culture, but also our social framework and values rarely take into account the needs, wishes and abilities of people with dementia.

## Structural Violence and Cultural Participation

For the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung " structural violence is an avoidable impairment of basic human needs or, more generally, of life, which reduces the real degree of need satisfaction below what is potentially possible."

Structural violence thus occurs when a social system is structured in such a way that certain people or groups of people cannot participate in all areas of social life or are disadvantaged. This also applies, among other things, to people with dementia, who usually remain excluded from cultural life due to a lack of offerings tailored to their needs.

Fortunately, this is now also the beginning of change in small steps in Austria. This is because awareness of the exclusion and disadvantage of certain groups in cultural life has increased and the first offerings for these target groups are being established.

According to estimates by the Austrian Alzheimer's Association, there are currently around 100,000 people living with dementia in Austria. In 2050, this number will have risen to about 230,000.

Even if language fails, the heart never becomes demented. Art reaches our soul, shows us that we can still do many things. (Helga Rohra , author and dementia sufferer)

## **First cultural offers for people with dementia**

On the initiative of Pro Senectute , a cultural offer for people with dementia has been established and disseminated. These are special museum tours for those affected, their relatives and caregivers.

Pro Senectute employees got to know these "special tours" at the Wallraf Richartz Museum in Cologne. Touched by the reactions of those affected and their accompanying persons and the sensitive and appreciative design, the idea was born to bring this offer to Austria.

In November 2015, Jochen Schmauck -Langer from dementia+art , who developed this offer, held the first training seminar on "Cultural Participation for People with Dementia" in Vienna. After the first successful seminar, further training courses followed in Linz and Salzburg.

In addition to museum staff working in the field of art education, people from the elderly, nursing homes and senior citizens are also invited to the seminars. In addition to the theoretical and practical examination of the topic, it is also important for us that all participants get to know each other and network.

## **Already existing offers at Austrian museums**

We are very pleased that this initiative has developed into an offer of guided tours for people with dementia and their relatives in a wide variety of cities in Austria. For example, since 2016 there have been guided tours at three Viennese museums for the first time: the Albertina, the Belvedere and the Kunsthistorisches Museum. In Linz, guided tours are offered at the Lentos, the Kunstmuseum , the Landesmuseum and the Stadtmuseum Nordico , and in Wiener Neustadt at the Museum St. Peter an der Sperr . The Salzburg Museum will start with its first guided tours.

## **Strengthening resources**

The positive effect of this offer can usually be seen on people's faces. And it is also emphasized by the caregivers that these excursions are a special experience for the people themselves. And so we know from the feedback of relatives, caregivers and the art mediators that this offer is enthusiastically accepted.