

ReconcArt



Reconciliation  
through Art:  
Perceptions of  
Hijab



Culture Programme

Education and Culture DG

## What is ReconcArt?

ReconcArt is the acronym of "Reconciliation through Art: Perceptions of Hijab" a trans-national project co-funded by the European Commission in the context of the Culture Programme 2007-2013 "Crossing Borders – Connecting Cultures". The project is implemented by research institutes, theatre companies and other cultural organisations in three European countries, Greece, Bulgaria and Italy, from November 2007 to October 2009. At a time when the Muslim custom of Hijab (the headscarf worn by Muslim women) has caused significant controversy around Europe and attracted much debate and media attention, ReconcArt attempts to explore the issues underlying the use of this symbolic garment as perceived by Muslim and non-Muslim women. Using a grassroots approach and a methodology based on self-expression through the performing arts, the project encourages women of different religious and cultural backgrounds to think, feel and act towards a reconciliation point based on mutual understanding.



## Aim and objectives

ReconcArt aims to promote a deeper understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim women living in Europe, using the arts as a medium to achieve this understanding and share it with the wider public.

ReconcArt has also the following objectives:

- To promote networking between European cultural organisations which share an interest in the debate surrounding the practice of Hijab
- To provide an "arena" for intercultural dialogue and innovative artistic creation
- To improve the competencies of artists and the general public in understanding the culture of minorities; and consolidate the role of the performing arts in promoting such understanding
- To attract as many citizens as possible from majority and minority social groups and especially women of the younger generations to become involved, become involved.

## Who benefits?

- Performing artists, including writers, directors, actors, musicians, dancers; creative expression teachers; and related visual artists.
- Cultural organisations promoting the performing arts.
- Researchers and academics interested in studying the cultural meaning of Hijab in contemporary European society.
- Organisations supporting ethnic minorities and promoting social inclusion.
- The general public and in particular women of Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds.

## Methodology

ReconcArt employs creative expression techniques such as acting, dancing, painting, writing, music and other forms of art, to help express and analyse the deep-rooted feelings and thoughts held by women on this subject, irrespective of origin or religion. It is proven that when done in a secure and non-judgemental environment, creative expression practices are very powerful in releasing people's emotions and therefore reaching the desired result of true understanding.

Moreover, ReconcArt draws on the collective effort of theatre writers, directors, actors, creative expression instructors, and other performing and visual artists interested in working with non-professionals, developing creative expression approaches and reaching a valid artistic result through this route.



## Activities

The project uses different routes to achieve its aims and sets in motion a variety of actions that are common in the three participating countries. These include:

- *Background research* to identify the social, cultural and political aspects that underlie the use of Hijab by women in Europe, in order to identify the main themes that would guide artistic expression.
- A series of *creative expression workshops*, bringing together a group of women in each country, including Muslim and non-Muslim ones, those that wear the Hijab and those that don't, to express and debate their feelings and thoughts towards the practice of Hijab using different art forms, under the guidance of a facilitator.
- *Production and public performance of a theatre play*, based on the material collected and themes identified during the workshops, performed by the workshop participants. A different version of this play will be presented in each country, based on the outcome of the creative workshops in this country.
- An *international cultural event*, including performances of the three different productions of the Greek, Italian and Bulgarian teams; a conference bringing together all those that participated in the project, as well as members of the academic and artistic communities with an interest in the subject and all other interested individuals; and an exhibition of artworks inspired by the Hijab.
- A *publication* featuring key findings of the research, material produced during the creative expression workshops and production of the plays, aiming to promote and disseminate the results of the project.



## Project partners

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