Formal Report: Analysis of the "Tools" Activity for the Erasmus+ Project "Art of the Mask: A Tool from our Past"

1.0 Introduction: Project Mandate and Collaborative Framework

This report provides a formal analysis of the "Tools" activity, a core component of the Erasmus+ project titled "Art of the Mask: A Tool from our Past." Its strategic function is to document the tangible outputs, budgetary framework, and collaborative structure established between the participating cultural organisations. The activity was designed as a virtual collaboration to produce key resources that advance the project's mission of bridging historical mask heritage with contemporary artistic and educational practices. The "Tools" activity was executed through a virtual partnership, culminating in the creation of four distinct deliverables.

The core details of this initiative are summarized as follows:
- **Activity Name: "Tools: The art of the mask, a tool from our past."**
- **Activity Period: 4 November 2024 - 16 February 2025**
- **Activity Type: Virtual activity**
- **Lead Organisation: Theatre Transformations (France)**
- **Participating Organisation: Občianske združenie Lišov Múzeum (Slovakia)**
- **Total Budget: €4,914.00**

This activity was instrumental in translating the project's research and collaborative workshops into tangible resources designed to serve diverse audiences and advance the project's overarching goals.

2.0 Strategic Objectives and Rationale

The "Tools" activity was strategically designed to fulfill specific, high-level objectives of the broader Erasmus+ project. The development of its deliverables was not an end in itself but rather a targeted means to achieve a series of interconnected cultural, educational, and professional goals. The rationale behind the creation of these tools was to provide a sustainable foundation for knowledge sharing, community engagement, and cross-border cooperation.

The activity was intended to directly support the six primary project objectives, as articulated below:

1. **Bridging Heritage and Contemporary Practice:** By documenting project findings in pedagogical guides for museums and educators, the activity creates tangible links between historical mask heritage and modern artistic practices. These resources are designed to be immediately useful for stakeholders in the education and tourism sectors, translating research into accessible content.

2. **Empowering Educators and Curators:** The creation of a dedicated digital platform provides a comprehensive repository of resources on mask history, modern techniques, and cultural significance. This tool equips professionals with the necessary information to teach the subject effectively and with confidence. This platform is a community platform which will grow organically.

3. **Promoting Cultural Diversity and Inclusion:** The project aims to foster a greater sense of inclusivity by incorporating diverse cultural perspectives. It brings a European dimension to disadvantaged communities, including the rural population of Lišov, Slovakia, and socially disadvantaged groups in Chambéry, France, promoting understanding and cross-cultural dialogue.

4. **Developing European-Scale Project Management Skills:** The joint creation of pedagogical documents and a complex digital platform serves as a foundational stage for the partner organisations. This process allows the team to develop and refine cross-border cooperation, communication, and project management skills on a European scale, building capacity for future international endeavors.

5. **Strengthening the Creative Industry:** The activity creates valuable opportunities for artists, performers, and crafters to showcase their talents and share their expertise. By providing platforms for visibility and knowledge exchange, the project contributes to the professional development of creatives and the overall growth of the sector.

6. **Enhancing Community Engagement:** By highlighting the mask as a powerful educational and artistic tool, the project seeks to inspire creativity and cultural exploration among local communities, particularly young people. The outputs are designed to improve understanding of cultural heritage and encourage active participation in the arts.

These strategic objectives directly informed the design and content of the specific deliverables produced during the activity, ensuring that each tool serves a clear and vital purpose within the project's framework.

3.0 Analysis of Key Deliverables (The "Tools")

This section provides a detailed analysis of the four primary tools developed during the activity. Each deliverable was conceived to address distinct needs and audiences, collectively forming a comprehensive suite of resources that fulfill the project's strategic objectives. The following evaluation examines the purpose, content, and intended impact of each pedagogical guide and digital asset.

3.1 Pedagogical Guide 1: Lišov Múzeum Visitor's Guide

The primary purpose of this guide is to serve as a "Focus On" document that enhances the museum visitor's experience. It is designed to provide deeper context and understanding of specific highlights within the Lišov Múzeum's collection of over 400 masks, moving beyond simple artifact labels to offer personal, interpretive narratives.

The guide is structured around an introduction by Jakub Dvorský, which frames the museum's collection and the Erasmus+ collaboration. This is followed by a series of personal accounts written by project participants, each focusing on a mask they chose after collaborative workshops held at the museum in November 2024. These sections capture the intimate and artistic spirit of the project; for example, Hélène describes the Songye mask as a being "between the sun and the moon," while Tracey connects the woven Papua New Guinea mask to her professional expertise as a "knitting specialist." By detailing the history, form, and personal resonance of these and other masks, such as the Sardinian and Eastern European fabric masks, the guide functions as a tangible outcome of the cross-cultural exchange at the heart of the project.

3.2 Pedagogical Guide 2: The Mask Kit

This guide serves as a comprehensive educational tool designed to accompany a physical mask kit. Its role is to enable users not only to explore the rich history and cultural significance of various masks but also to learn hands-on crafting and performance techniques. It acts as a bridge between theory and practice, empowering users to engage with the art form creatively.

The guide's key sections are summarized below:

Section Title	Content and Purpose
Introduction	Positions the Mask Kit as a key educational outcome of the Erasmus+ project 'Art of the Mask: A Tool from our Past,' born from international residencies in Slovakia and France.
What is the Mask? / History of the Mask	Defines the mask's multifaceted functions (protection, resource, mirror, liberation) and offers a concise history of its use in global civilizations, from African rituals to Greek theatre.
About Carnival	Explains the cultural origins of carnival, highlighting its etymology from the Latin `carne` (meat) and `vale` (farewell), and its role as a period of celebration and symbolic social inversion before Lent.
Our Masks	Details the full range of traditional and contemporary masks included in the kit: the traditional Kallikantzaros, Kukeri, and Mamuthones; two traditional fabric character masks; three contemporary "baby" masks; and three contemporary Commedia-inspired masks.
Mask-Making Techniques	Provides practical, step-by-step instructions for creating masks using three distinct methods: fabric, papier-mâché, and dried gourds, including guidance on materials and tools.
Mask Exploration Techniques	Presents a pedagogical framework for performance, outlining a methodical progression from a Warm-up (body, voice, intellect) to Meeting the mask and culminating in Free and Structured Improvisation exercises.

3.3 Digital Asset 1: Collaborative Web Pages

The collaborative web pages functions as a public-facing digital archive and documentation tool. Its primary purpose is to chronicle the partnership between Theatre Transformations and Lišov Múzeum, making the project's process and outcomes transparent and accessible to a broad online audience.

The page's core feature is a chronological presentation of the project's four key phases: Residency 1, Residency 2, the mask kit exploration, and Residency 3. This narrative is brought to life through a rich collection of photos and videos, offering a dynamic and engaging record of the collaboration. To maximize reach and accessibility, the web page was developed with a multilingual approach, with dedicated versions in English EN), Slovak (SK) and Frenchb(F) to be hosted on the respective websites of both partner organisations.

3.4 Digital Asset 2: The International Network of Mask Specialists (INM@SKS) Platform

The INM@SKS platform is an ambitious digital deliverable. Its strategic vision is to create a vibrant digital hub where specialists can not only connect but also showcase performances, share techniques, curate virtual exhibitions, and reach a wider market of enthusiasts. The platform aims to bridge the gap between virtual interaction and future physical gatherings.

The platform's value is delivered through several key features:

• **Virtual Exchange and Discussion:** It provides a dedicated virtual meeting space for specialists to share ideas, ask questions, and engage in professional dialogue, serving as a catalyst for real-world collaborative projects.
• **Knowledge Repository:** A centralized "Resources" section acts as a knowledge bank, offering access to a curated collection of articles, tutorials, and scholarly information, allowing members to share and discover technical expertise.
• **Specialist Directory:** An accessible directory of members allows specialists to identify, connect with, and learn from peers around the world, fostering a strong sense of community and facilitating professional partnerships.
• **Event Visibility:** A dedicated feature for sharing information on upcoming workshops, performances, conferences, and exhibitions helps members stay informed about opportunities and happenings within the global mask community.
Together, these four distinct yet complementary tools successfully address the project's multifaceted objectives, providing a rich legacy of pedagogical, documentary, and community-building resources.

4.0 Target Audience and Expected Impact
Defining the project's target audiences is critical to measuring the potential reach and impact of the created tools. The deliverables were carefully designed to resonate with both specialized professional groups and the general public, ensuring broad relevance and utility.
The primary target audiences for the project's outputs are:
• **Primary Professional Audience:**
  ◦ Theater directors and actors
  ◦ Museum curators, researchers, and historians
  ◦ Artists and crafters
• **Primary General Audience:**
  ◦ Individuals with an interest in theatre, art, history, and cultural heritage.
Beyond these core target groups, the project identifies direct and indirect beneficiaries who will engage with the results:
• **Direct Beneficiaries:**
  ◦ Young people engaged with the activities of Theatre Transformations and Lišov Múzeum, who are the immediate users of the tools.
• **Indirect Beneficiaries:**
  ◦ Students and educators who will utilise the pedagogical guides and digital resources in formal and informal learning settings.
  ◦ The broader community interested in arts, crafts, and culture, who will have new opportunities to engage with the art of the mask.
The expected results of these tools are multifaceted. At their core, they are designed to foster a deeper appreciation for the art form by making its rich history and cultural significance more accessible. The resources aim to encourage creativity and self-expression, providing users with both the inspiration and the practical skills to engage with mask-making and performance. Finally, by creating spaces for interaction and knowledge sharing, the tools are expected to build a sense of community and connection among individuals with a shared interest, regardless of their geographical location.
The successful creation of these tools, tailored to these specific audiences, is a direct result of the dedicated collaborative effort between the project's partner organisations.

5.0 Conclusion: Synthesis of Achievements and Future Outlook
The "Tools" activity of the "Art of the Mask: A Tool from our Past" project has been successfully completed, resulting in the production of a comprehensive and high-value

suite of resources. This phase of the project effectively translated collaborative research and artistic exchange into durable assets that will serve the project's long-term goals.

The activity's principal achievement is the creation of four distinct and valuable resources: two detailed pedagogical guides (the *Lišov Múzeum Visitor's Guide* and *The Mask Kit* guide), a dynamic collaborative web page documenting the partnership, and an ambitious global digital platform, the International Network of Mask Specialists (INM@SKS). These deliverables directly address the project's strategic objectives, from empowering educators to strengthening the creative sector and fostering community engagement.

Beyond these tangible outputs, the project has reinforced the unifying power of art and culture. The collaborative process has built a strong bridge between the partner organisations in France and Slovakia, connecting generations, traditions, and futures. The resulting tools are more than just repositories of information; they are invitations to explore heritage, spark innovation, and, as stated in the introduction to *The Mask Kit*, "connect with the universal language of the mask."

These tools now lay a robust foundation for future collaborative endeavors. They will continue to inspire creativity, promote meaningful cultural exchange, and build a lasting community connected by a shared passion for this timeless art form.