The State of Art of Storytelling in EU

STORYTELLER - EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS UNDER RISK OF EXCLUSION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF STORYTELLING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN UNDER-EQUIPPED EU COUNTRIES

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The following document with the proud name “The State of the Art of Storytelling in EU” is an Intellectual output of the Erasmus + project, supported under the Key Action “Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices” supporting strategic partnership for vocational and educational training with the main objective on “Development of Innovation”. The name represents the key background of the officially stated name for the first IO, which is “Compendium of storytelling training & certification Initiatives”.

The partnership consortium consists of seven organisations, working together with the main aim to set concrete foundations for professional storytelling development in “less equipped” European countries. With the latter, the consortium takes a clear stand to achieve and contribute to a more balanced development of storytelling profession in Europe, thus contribute to a more empowered and equal society.

First Intellectual output is ready for you to pave through the first goal of the project – what already exists in the field of storytelling across the consortium countries and how it can be upgraded in terms of developing a specific curriculum to acquire professional storytelling skills...

Moira Kobse
Coordinator of the Project

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1 EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS UNDER RISK OF EXCLUSION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF STORYTELLING PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN UNDER-EQUIPPED EU COUNTRIES - Grant agreement no. 16-202-021567 (KA2-VET-5/16), short acronym of the project is STORYTELLER.
2 OZARA d.o.o. from Slovenia, BBRZ from Austria, EOLAS S.L from Soain, UNIPOSMS from Italy, STORYBAG FROM The Netherlads, CERES Europe from Northern Ireland (UK), and IMAGINE d.o.o. from Slovenia.
INTRODUCTION

The present Compendium represents the first output of the Erasmus Plus granted project “StoryTeller” - Empowerment of persons under risk of exclusion through development of storytelling professional training in under-equipped EU countries. The main and long-term goal of this project is to set the foundation for a long-term development of professional storytelling in the “less-equipped” European countries, and by that contribute to a more balanced development of storytelling profession in Europe, thus contribute to a more empowered and equal society. The project is run by a consortium made by 7 organizations from different EU countries:

1. OZARA d.o.o. (Slovenia) is a Service and Disability Company. Its mission is the training, employment, vocational rehabilitation and social inclusion of persons with disabilities (unemployed persons with disabilities, difficult-to-employ persons having limitations and barriers regarding employment and labour market integration opportunities due to illness, injury or functional limitations). Website: http://www.ozara.si.

2. BBRZ - Berufliches Bildungs und Rehabilitationszentrum Österreich (Austria) is an association providing services in the fields of prevention, intensive rehabilitation and health-related organisational counselling. It also develops model projects in the field of vocational rehabilitation. Website: http://www.bbrz.at.

3. EOLAS S.L. (Spain) is a company offering services related to the definition of strategies to obtain funding and grants (international, European, national and regional) and accompanies the whole process, from the conceptual and design phase up to the management and closing of the project. Website: http://www.eolas.es.

4. UNIPOSMS – Università Popolare Nuova Scuola Medica Salernitana (Italy) is a voluntary association aiming to promote development of communities and facilitate change and educational processes throughout Italy and the Mediterranean basin. UNIPOSMS is internationally recognized as one of the guardians of the teaching traditions of the ancient Schola Medica Salernitana, considered as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO Representative. Website: http://www.uniposms.it.

5. STORYBAG (The Netherlands) is a consultancy company specialised in storytelling which designs, organizes and facilitates in-company and open workshops and trainings for diverse national and international clients. Other activities are development of culture- and corporate stories for (inter)national clients, but also international workshops and training in the cultural sector and adult education sector, on national basis as well as within the European Lifelong Learning Program (Grundtvig / Erasmus+). Website: http://www.storybag.nl.

6. CERES Europe (NI) Ltd (Northern Ireland, UK) is an NGO (non-profit), a registered Co-operative and a company limited by Guarantee. CERES offers a wide range of facilities, both intellectual and physical, ranging from locally here in the North West coast of Northern Ireland to as far afield as Melbourne, Australia. Among the expertise offered, CERES has created a local and regional online Storytelling centre. Website: http://cereseurope.com
7. IMAGINE d.o.o. (Slovenia) is a company engaged in developing business software. IMAGINE develops general business software products, that most companies need (for the conduct of business, accounting, payroll, fixed assets, travel orders, etc). Furthermore, it develops specific products and modules for individual activity, also using innovative, creative designs, methods, and tools. Website: http://www.imagine.si.

All the partners have contributed to the creation of this Compendium, which aims to describe the different storytelling training and certifications initiatives in storytelling throughout the 6 EU countries involved in the project.

As first aim, the Compendium wants to describe the theoretical background of the project (Chapter 1). A definition of the terms story, narrative and discourse is given, and the epistemological and philosophical stance from where the project starts is established.

Secondly, the Compendium reports the results of a research about the “state of art” of storytelling in the 6 EU countries involved in the project. The information gathered from this research try and answer to the following questions:

- Are storytelling training courses already developed in the 6 EU countries involved in the project? More specifically: Are training courses in storytelling referring to helping professions (health professions, social workers, etc.) already created?
- How are such training structured?
- What types of certificate are granted by such courses?
- Have there been any EU granted projects in the past. If yes, what was their aim?

While Chapter 2 explains the research methodology, Chapter 3 and 4 describe respectively Phase 1 (desk research) and Phase 2 (interviews) of the research. The analysis aims to construct conceptual dimensions useful to describe the characteristic that a training in storytelling with people at risk should have, according to the information collected both by analysing already existing courses in storytelling, and by interviewing experts in storytelling and/or working with people at risk. Those conceptual dimensions will be the guidelines for the development of the training course in professional storytelling, which is the main and long-term goal of this project. The analysis has been conducted by applying Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology, which we believe to be consistent with the theoretical background of the project.

Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the results and gives some useful recommendations about how to consider them for Phase 3 (developing the training in storytelling for people at risk).
1. AIM OF THE PROJECT “STORYTELLER”

In this chapter we describe the aim of the project “StoryTeller”. Moreover, we propose our definition of “storytelling” and stress some epistemological and theoretical notions about the concept of “story”, “narrative” and “discourse”.

1.1. Describing the project

The storyteller project aims at developing a new VET training in storytelling methodology as a highly innovative approach, based on long tradition of storytelling, proven useful for empowering communities of all kinds. The professional VET training is developed in 6 EU languages (English, Slovenian, Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch), and will be freely available on the project OER in 2018.

The training is conceived to improve knowledge, skills and competencies of a wide variety of professionals (professional and social workers, educators, mentors, psychologists, nurses, volunteers etc.), working with disadvantaged groups of people facing risk-of-exclusion situation (e.g. disabled, migrants, refugees, asylum seeker, Roma, long-term unemployed etc.), aiming to empower them for social integration, active citizenship and creation of their own better future.

With raising societal challenges, and growing population of persons under risk of exclusion, professionals working with these disadvantaged and socially excluded groups constantly seek for new knowledge, skills and approaches to be able to empower their clients/users in a most effective way and offer them an opportunity to get more actively involved into the society. Working with people’s stories together with people themselves, putting in front a positive change orientation, can help heal and increase understanding, and by that improve (mental) health, self-confidence and self-acceptance, personal leadership and personal–future planning, as well as improved communication with others. As such the project carries within a strong inclusion component.

1.2. Why a storytelling-based project?

Storytelling can be regarded as one of the oldest healing arts (Dyer, 2001). Each person has a unique story, unlike any other. These stories are constantly changing and being rewritten, reconstructed, even discarded from the moment we are born until we die (Elwyn & Gwyn, 1999). Forming a story about one’s life experiences improves physical and mental health (Pennebaker & Seagal, 1999). Story performance honed our mythologies long before they were written and edited by scribes, poets, or scholars (Mello, 2001).

At the most basic level “Telling the Story” is a means of transmitting ideas from one person to another (Cox, 2001). Storytelling is a part of life, intrinsic to most cultures. They help people make sense of the world-life’s experiences, dilemmas and hardships. Stories can educate, inspire and build rapport (Dyer, 2001). They are a means of communicating, recreating, and helping preserve cultures (Bowles, 1995), by translating memories into a more concrete manner that can be handed down verbally or in written form. Telling the story can provide the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of one’s experiences and oneself.
Stories convey values and emotions, and can reveal the differences and similarities between people’s experiences. Elucidating personal stories involves sharing which can help form bonds and supportive networks. With reflection, these can help to develop resilience (East et al., 2010). Storytelling is part of how humans translate their individual private experience of understanding into a public culturally negotiated form (Bruner, 1990). Without this interactive narrative experience, humans could not express their knowledge or thought. In this Compendium, we follow the definition given by Frühmann et al. (2016), according to which storytelling is a conscious and planned act, “where stories are told for certain purposes – e.g. to inspire change, to entertain, to share knowledge, etc.” (p. 24).

Beside storytelling, the project has its theoretical basis on other approaches to change: Narrative Practice (White & Epston, 1990; Morgan, 2000; Payne, 2000) and Participative Narrative Inquiry (Kurtz, 2014). To better comprehend these methods, it is at first useful to provide the definition of three important concepts: story, narrative and discourse.

1.2.1. What do we mean with “story”?

In regards to the definition of the term story, we embrace Cynthia Kurtz’s ideas on the topic (Kurtz, 2014). First of all, the Author stresses that “[…] over time I’ve come to realize that every definition of story I have ever read – including my own – has been completely wrong. Or rather, wrongly complete. The reason good people disagree on the definition of story isn’t that some are right and some are wrong; it is that they are looking at different parts of the same elephant” (p. 15). Kurtz suggests that, instead of trying to give a definition of the term story, it is more useful to describe the interconnected dimensions that define what a story is: the form, the function and the phenomenon.

The form of a story “[…] is its communicative structure ad meaning” (ibid.), through which it conveys a message. A story structure is a way to give organization to information, and stories can be categorized according to the different structures characterizing them. Frühmann et al. (2016) suggest the following categories:
- folk tales
- myths, legends and dream stories
- the “hero’s journey” (Campbell, 1968; Vogler, 2007)
- clan stories
- repetitive (hi)stories (Boyd, 2009)
- urban legends
- episodes.

The function of a story “[…] is its utility to thought, decision and action” (ibid.). A story helps us to understand or remind something that can be useful for our life. In fact: “We use stories to build maps of the world we experience so we can make decisions about how to act. We use stories to make decisions about what to believe in what we see and hear. We judge a story’s consistency, completeness, and veracity in order to hold accountable those who tell them and make them happen. We use stories to playfully simulate possible outcomes before we commit to a course of action. Stories provide a “partial suspension of the rules of the real” that helps us safely explore the future. We use stories to condense experiences into packages that re-expand in the minds of listeners. Stories are like communicative suitcases: wrappings
that protect experiences, feelings, and beliefs so that they can connect people through time and space” (p. 32).

Lastly, the *phenomenon* of a story “[…] is its life history as it moves through time and society” (*ibid.*), and relates to how the story is remembered and passed down from one person to another.

Considering those three dimensions, Kurtz proposes a working definition of what a story is: “[…] a recounting of events based on emotional experience from a perspective” (p. 21). We believe that such a working definition can be very useful for the project’s aim of developing a training in storytelling for people at risk, because it helps us to identify the skills and the attitude a helping professional should develop in order to work with stories.

### 1.2.2. Story vs Narrative

It is not so easy to identify a difference between story and narrative. Usually, these terms are used interchangeably (Frühmann et al., 2016). We can rely on what Morgan (2000) says: “As humans we are interpreting beings. We all have daily experiences of events that we seek to make meaningful. The stories we have about our lives are created through linking certain events together in a particular sequence across a time period, and finding a way of explaining or making sense of them. This meaning forms the plot of the story. We give meanings to our experience constantly as we live our lives. A narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story” (p. 5). In other words, while narrative can be seen as the structure of events – the architecture of the story, comparable to the design of a building, story is the sequence of events, the order in which the narrative occurs – i.e., the tour through the building (Nichol, 2012).

Starting from these ideas, in this Compendium we will consider *narrative* as the term identifying “[…] the everyday accounts we have of our life, trying to make meaning of what has happened and why it has happened, and in doing so drawing upon different discourses” (Frühmann et al., 2016, p. 24).

### 1.2.3. The concept of “discourse” and its relation to power

The use of the concepts *discourse* in a storytelling and narrative context can be related to the post-structuralist thoughts that came to international prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. The term “post-structuralism” identifies the heterogeneous work of a series of European philosophers and critical theorists, including Michel Foucault. Foucault (1969, 1971) suggests that a discourse is the result of a repetitive pattern of language, in which social norms and taken-for-granted ideas about the world are established. Our attitudes, identities and beliefs are shaped by *dominant discourses*, i.e. dominating stories defining what is normal and desired and therefore pointing out certain groups of people or certain behaviours as not-normal, and less-desired, often leading to processes of exclusion (Frühmann et al., 2016). Furthermore “[…] the dominant stories are internalized in people and form part of the stories they tell about themselves, leading to feelings of disempowerment, lack of agency and closing of doors to diverse opportunities in society. The ways we talk about things lead to very concrete and material consequences” (*ibid.*, p. 24).
Discourse for Foucault is a system of representation, “[…] a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way for representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment […]. Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language, but […] since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do – our conduct – all practices have a discursive aspect” (Hall, 1992, p. 291). For Foucault, discourse is about language and practice (Hall, 1997). In other words, discourse, knowledge and power are inextricably related.

More specifically, the power acting through discourse is called modern power (Westlund, 1999) and is “[…] self-disciplining as it prescribes desired and undesired identities and therefore what to strive for” (Frühmann et al., 2016, p. 52). Consequently, telling stories is a way “[…] to exercise power, as stories will always draw upon different discourses – dominating discourses or counter-discourses that take a stand against the dominating ideas. […] So we cannot not exercise power. However, discourses do not completely determine us and we have a choice when it comes to positioning ourselves within a discourse or in opposition to a discourse” (ibid.)

1.3. Discourse and Narrative Practice (NP)

If storytelling is a part of the domains of knowledge/power, it is possible for it to become a form of social control (Murdock, 2009). If we accept this stance, then a critical evaluation of storytelling as practice of power is in order. How can a professional use storytelling with such a critical attitude? We believe that he/she can deepen his/her knowledge in the social-constructivist epistemology, which is deeply bound to postmodern and post-structural philosophy. By doing so, he/she would probably meet a particular approach called Narrative Practice (or Narrative Approach).

Social constructivists believe that there is no objective social reality; instead, the way we view ourselves, others, and the entire social world in which we live is created (constructed) by social processes, and most significantly, through our interactions with others (ibid.). NP has its roots in the social constructionist perspective and turns the focus towards our every-day conversations and the discourses we buy into when we talk about things and interpret happenings in certain ways (Frühmann et al., 2016.). Essentially, narrative practitioners see life as a process of storytelling (Murdock, 2009). They analyse the idea of social power, as determining the truths by which society operates, which in turn, strongly influence the stories individuals create about their lives. Power and knowledge (that accepted by the dominant culture) are inseparable. In fact, it is difficult to see the relationship, for the workings of power are disguised under the notion of “truth.”

NP is applied in many different fields. At first, it was developed in the field of counseling and therapy, where it is called “Narrative Therapy”. Over the last years, the methods developed in the therapeutic room have been declined in other contexts, such as mediation (Winslade & Monk, 2000, 2008), organizational development (Hancock & Epston, 2008) and community work (Denborough et al., 2006). Whatever the field it is applied to, NP “[…] concerns itself with the deliverance of clients from the weight of oppressive and totalizing stories via liberating the client’s voice and preferences” (Doan, 1998, p. 219).
Narrative practitioners approach clients from a perspective that emphasizes health and strengths (Semmler & Williams, 2000). This stance, combined with the idea that reality is socially created, leads to a questioning of traditional psychological perspectives (Murdock, 2009). NP often supports and encourages people to question the dominant stories of their cultures (White & Epston, 1990). Human life is seen as series of stories. These stories are created over time through our attempts to connect events in our experiences and in this way, derive meaning from them (Morgan, 2000): “[…] for narrative therapists, stories consist of events linked in sequence across time according to plot” (ibid., p. 5). The process begins when we start connecting a number of events into a plot or the beginnings of a story. Once these first connections are made, it begins to be easy to gather more events that are consistent with the story line. In other words, events become “privileged” over other events and are included in what becomes the dominant story for the individual (ibid.).

In contrast to dominant stories are alternate stories (White & Epston, 1990). We all live such complex lives that invariably there are aspects of our experience that do not get included in or are hidden by dominant stories. These aspects are known as alternate stories, and are often important in helping people (Murdock, 2009). Stories, however, are not created in isolation; they are created through the interactions we have with others. Stories are also heavily influenced by the culture in which the person participates. In fact, NP reprises the term used by Foucault of dominant discourse (or cultural discourse) to refer to culturally based “truths” that influence our lives (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 2001). Those who comply or accept these discourses are in the “in” group and those who don’t are marginalized. An example of a Western European cultural discourse is individualism – the idea that a person should develop a strong sense of self, separated from others. Other examples of cultural discourses are sexism, classism, racism, heterosexism, adultism, developmentalism, and capitalism (ibid.).

One special type of story is a problem-saturated story, which is what people bring to counseling (Payne, 2000). For some people – who we can call “people at risk” – the problem saturated story is the dominant story of their lives at that time, so they need help to craft at least another story, that can be considered an alternative to the problem-saturated one.

1.4. Participative Narrative Inquiry

Participative Narrative Inquiry (PNI) is a method of working with groups and individuals which “[…] focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience” (Frühmann et al., 2016, p. 69). This method is also deeply influenced by NP (Kurtz, 2014). Essential to PNI is the use of stories of personal experience. Storytellers are invited to work with clients’ stories as well as their own stories, always keeping in mind that the aim of their work is to help communities and/or individuals to achieve a goal (ibid.).

Asking questions to start or to prompt stories, asking questions about the stories, is an important activity in the process (Frühmann et al., 2016). It helps to explore the problem-saturated story and, at the same time, to explore solutions and improvements. Asking questions about people’s stories helps storytellers to practice double listening (Meyer, 2015), which is useful for opening up multiple stories. Double listening has its roots in the practice of helping others find and develop preferred, alternative stories in Narrative Therapy.
According to White (2006), it is important to actively support people to speak about their problems, while simultaneously listening for the ways people have responded to such problems and as well as to what they value. The stories of how people may have responded to the problems are often dismissed and diminished, which leads to a sense of personal desolation and shame (Meyer, 2015). Developing people’s stories of responding to problems and preserving areas of value in their lives builds a powerful counter story to the problem-saturated story. Acknowledging and honouring this counter story can then be used to help people develop a preferred sense of self. The skill of hearing both stories is “doubly listening” (Meyer, 2015).

1.5. SUMMARY

We have defined what we mean by story, narrative and discourse, three terms that are deeply interrelated, but that we believe to be more useful for the aim of the project, if we keep them conceptually separated. We have also described the philosophical and epistemological foundations of the project, as well as the methods applied (Storytelling as a conscious and planned act, Narrative Practice and Participative Narrative Inquiry). Such theories and methods also deeply influence the research methodologies and analysis reported in this Compendium.

References


Campbell J. (1968), The hero with a thousand faces (2nd ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.


2. THE RESEARCH: AIMS AND METHODS

The chapter describes the aims of the research about the “state of the art” of storytelling in EU, especially in the countries involved in the Project. Furthermore, the methodology used in order to conduct the research is discussed.

2.1. Aim of the research

The general aim of the research is to gather information about how storytelling is considered and applied with people at risk in EU countries, especially the ones involved in the Project. On the basis of this information, we believe we could develop a structured training in storytelling with people at risk. Such training could differentiate itself from the existing training courses because it would draw inspiration from them, but at the same time:

1. it would decline their ideas in a postmodern, social constructivist and post-structuralist way, as it would emphasize:
   - the idea of storytelling as a co-constructive process
   - the performative power of language, meaning that people are seen as the products of social and communicative processes
   - the idea that we create meanings through language, narratives and stories
2. it could implement some of the aspects of the existing courses.

Consequently, Phase 1 consists in a desk research on the courses teaching storytelling in the helping profession, especially those organized in the countries involved in the Project. Furthermore, we also focus on any past Erasmus Plus granted and Horizon2020 granted projects regarding storytelling applied in the work with people at risk.

The Phase 2 of the research consists in a series of interviews conducted by all the partners involved in the Project in their own countries (except for IMAGINE, which is not involved in this Intellectual Output). People interviewed are:

a. helping professionals (psychologists, counsellors, coaches, social workers, physicians, etc.) who already apply – or could apply – storytelling in their work;

b. professional storytellers who work with people at risk;

c. professional storytellers who do not work with people at risk, but are asked to think about a possibility to do that with their work environment.

Some of the experts interviewed are also involved in the courses we identified in Phase 1. We believe that the data gathered in Phase 2, combined with those collected in Phase 1, would provide us sufficient information to develop a course in storytelling with people at risk, which could be useful and satisfying for professionals aiming to work with stories and narrative principles in the field of helping relations. Such course would also be characterized by a more international approach, putting together ideas from different sociocultural, national contexts.
2.2. Research methodology

The data gathered from Phase 1 and Phase 2 have been analysed through a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), in order to produce conceptual codes that could be helpful in developing the training. Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) is a type of methodology deeply influenced by postmodern and social-constructivist ideas. We decided to apply it because, as expressed in Chapter 1, our storytelling course will be inspired by the philosophical movements of Postmodernism, Social Constructivism and Post-Structuralism. Consequently, we believe that conducting a research based on the same “meta-theories” (Sousa, 2010) gives more consistency and coherency to this Project. CGT, in fact, has some characteristics that we believe particularly fit for the aim of the Project.

First of all, as a qualitative methodology it relies on interpretivist paradigm (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Morgan, 2000). Interpretivists avoid rigid structural frameworks such as in positivist research and adopt a more personal and flexible research structures (Carson et al., 2001) which are receptive to capturing meanings in human interaction (Black, 2006) and make sense of what is perceived as reality (Carson et al., 2001). They believe the researcher and his informants are interdependent and mutually interactive (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The interpretivist researcher enters the field with some sort of prior insight of the research context but assumes that this is insufficient in developing a fixed research design due to complex, multiple and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality (ibid.). The researcher remains open to new knowledge throughout the study and lets it develop with the help of informants. The use of such an emergent and collaborative approach is consistent with the interpretivist belief that humans have the ability to adapt, and that no one can gain prior knowledge of time and context bound social realities (ibid.). CGT is flexible and focused on spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant. CGT asks “open-ended” questions that are not necessarily worded in exactly the same way with each participant. With open-ended questions, participants are free to respond in their own words, and these responses tend to be more complex than simply “yes” or “no”. (Mack et al., 2005) With qualitative methodologies, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is often less formal than in quantitative research. Participants have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail than is typically the case with quantitative methods. In turn, researchers have the opportunity to respond immediately to what participants say by tailoring subsequent questions to information the participant has provided (ibid.).

Secondly, Grounded Theory – in its original sense – is a unique research methodology because the researchers do not begin their studies with a hypothesis. The theory that is formed is grounded in and emerges from the data; hence, the methodology was named “grounded theory” (Merriam, 2009). This characteristic seemed to be consistent with the idea of our research: we did not want to start with a hypothesis on how a training course in storytelling applied to helping professions should be, but wanted to individuate useful dimensions to apply in its development by gathering information from different sources, following a context-related approach, which we believe to be respectful of the culture of the different countries.

Thirdly, CGT, like most of qualitative methodologies, relies on the idea that the only reality is that constructed by the individuals involved (Creswell, 1994). Researchers are interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events (Willig,
This idea is consistent with social constructivist philosophy (Creswell, 1994; Frühmann et al., 2016). Qualitative methods let the subjects being studied provide better and richer answers to the researcher’s questions. This helps to obtain effective insights that might have been ignored by any other method. It is said that qualitative researchers examine the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions and not just the ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ questions. For this reason, qualitative research requires smaller but focused samples rather than large random samples (Frühmann et al., 2016). CGT extends the focus of Grounded Theory to postmodern deconstructions, interconnecting social worlds, arenas, matrices of structure, trajectories of action, resources, hierarchies of power and influence, social policies, hierarchies of suffering, situated and local readings of ordinary people and their lives (Denzin, 2007). Charmaz (2009) states: “Grounded Theory in its constructivist version is a profoundly interactive process” (p. 137). Drawing on the foundations of Social Constructivism, meaning is co-constructed with participants through interactive processes of interviewing, communication and actions in practice (Nagy HesseBiber & Leavy, 2008). Through these reflexive processes a new theory emerges from – rather than is discovered in – the data reflecting the practitioners’ lived experiences (Charmaz, 2009; Fassinger, 2005).

2.2.1. Constructivist Grounded Theory as a combined methodological approach

CGT is also influenced by the narrative ideas and principles (Riessman, 2000). CGT appears to be implement methodologies from Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry (or Narrative Analysis) and applying them under a postmodern, social-constructivist point of view. Lal et al. (2012) state that Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry have actually the same theoretical roots, which can be traced to American pragmatism. The perspectives of American pragmatists such as George Herbert Mead and John Dewey have been critical to the development of symbolic interactionism, which is the theoretical approach more commonly associated with Grounded Theory. Similarly, American pragmatists also had a profound influence on the development of Narrative Inquiry. Its development and application, in fact, has been influenced by Dewey’s theory of experience (Dewey, 1938) as well as by Bruner's Narrative Theory (Bruner, 1987, 1991). The latter can be seen as providing a conceptual bridge that strengthens links between Narrative Inquiry and constructivist applications of Grounded Theory. The emphasis in narrative theory on the meaning of symbolic systems that humans use to construct reality, such as language (Lal et al., 2012) does suggest theoretical commensurability between Grounded Theory (via symbolic interactionism) and Narrative Inquiry. Language is the most common form of data collected and analysed in both Narrative Inquiry and Grounded Theory approaches, although it is more common to limit the focus in Grounded Theory studies to what is being said as opposed to how it is said and what influences how it is said.

Due to its theoretical commensurability with Narrative Inquiry, CGT can be defined a “combined methodological approach” (Frühmann et al., 2016). In Chapter 1 we stressed that the training course in storytelling will be inspired by narrative approaches and by Kurtz’s Participative Narrative Inquiry (Kurtz, 2009), which is based in combined methodologies (Frühmann et al., 2016). Again, using a combined methodological approach to develop either the research or the training course, gives more consistency and coherence to the Project.
2.2.2. Data analysis in Constructivist Grounded Theory

CGT stresses the principle of flexibility, insisting that the analyst must “learn to tolerate ambiguity” and “become receptive to creating emergent categories and strategies” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 168). Consequently, Charmaz (ibid.) proposes at least two stages of coding procedure:

1. **Open coding.** During initial (or open) coding, Charmaz (ibid.) suggests to use two key questions to collect data: “What is the chief concern of participants?” and “How do they resolve this concern?”

2. **Refocused coding.** This stage consists in identifying the codes that are recurring or particularly significant in illuminating the studied phenomenon. These codes typically have “analytic momentum” and are pertinent to “carry the weight of the analysis,” which is also described as having the ability to “carry capacity” (ibid. p. 164).

All the data gathered in the two phases of our research have been analysed according this coding procedure. More specifically, the data from Phase 1 and Phase 2 have been open coded, and then such open codes have been submitted to a unified refocused coding, in order to build results that could be saturated by an integration of information collected by both the desk research and the interviews. We talk about “building” results instead of “finding” results because we adopt Frühmann et al.’s approach: “[…] a CGT-based researcher tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story: it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. Accordingly, the story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed” (Frühmann et al., 2016, p. 199).

2.2.3. Why we did not rely on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to analyse the data

Regarding the data analysis in qualitative research, a huge debate has risen about the pros and cons of Computer Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) (Gibbs et al., 2002). It is clear that the introduction of new technology has both expanded the ways in which qualitative researchers can collect data and also the settings and situations from which data can be collected. We actually believe that applying qualitative data analysis software has different advantages. By using CAQDAS, the researchers can gain more freedom from manual and clerical tasks, can save time and deal with large amounts of qualitative data. Finally, CAQDAS provide more flexibility, as well as improved validity and auditability of qualitative research (St. John & Johnson, 2000).

However, some authors have expressed concerns about the use of software for the more analytic aspects of qualitative research. Roberts & Wilson (2002) argue that the central activity of qualitative analysis is the interpretation of the various shades of meaning found in conversational and linguistic material. Computers, founded as they are on a digital and quantitative view of the world, are limited in how far they can help with such an interpretation. Consequently, there is no clear distinction between understanding and interpretation on the one hand and analysis on the other.

In addition, ICT appears to overstate the role of language as significant symbol (Craib 1984). Human languages are complex yet at the same time flexible, being capable of
describing and representing a vast range of social situations and responses (Gadamer, 1989; Macann, 1993). It is language that gives humans the experience of their "being-in-the-world" (Gadamer, 1976). Yet the complexity and ambiguity of language is not given full recognition in quantitative research. There, language is used uncritically, for example, on questionnaires, without thinking deeply about what it is or how it works or how it allows the world to be constituted and made use of (ibid.). So, although both quantitative and qualitative researchers use data that are language based, for the quantitative researcher the use of language is not in itself a problem or something that needs to be questioned. Quantitative researchers, arguably, tend to view language as a tool that can, with appropriate safeguards, be called upon to do a particular job in the same predictable and reliable way that a computer program might calculate a statistical measure (Roberts & Wilson, 2002).

For these reasons, we decided not to rely on CAQDAS and adopt an approach on data analysis based on continuous confrontation and comparison of our ideas about the coding process. This way of working has been applied both in Phase 1 and in Phase 2 of the research.

2.3. The research question

Any grounded theory study starts with a research question. As we already stressed, what distinguishes grounded theory from other methodologies is that it is explicitly emergent i.e. it does not set out to test a hypothesis. It sets out to find out which theory accounts for the research situation (Dick 2002). Whatever the interests may be, the study is exploratory and aims to seek out the research situation as it is. This means that the research questions are constructed and defined as research moves forward (Frühmann et al., 2016).

The question leading our research – and the whole Project, actually – can be expressed as follows: What are the characteristics of an effective and useful training in storytelling with people at risk? Considering this general question, we developed the stages of the Project and decided that a two-phase research could have been a useful starting point. The general research question helped us to reflect about a number of implications related to the development of our training. Such implications could be expressed in this way:

- How training in storytelling for helping relations is organized and structured in the 6 EU countries involved in the project
- What types of certificate are granted by such courses
- Which EU granted projects have been developed in the field of storytelling for helping professions.

The above-mentioned implications inspired us to formulate two lists of working questions, that led us during the data collection both in Phase 1 and in Phase 2 of the research. The questions in the first list (see Appendix 1) helped us to:

1. collect information on the way storytelling for helping professions is conceived, defined and taught in the 6 EU countries involved in the project
2. collect information whether the training courses have an accreditation/acknowledgment of sorts, or if it could be possible to start a process of accreditation/acknowledgement of storytelling for helping professions in the different countries.
3. run the interviews in Phase 2, through which we had the opportunity to an in-depth analysis of how storytelling is seen by experts and professionals in the 6 countries.

Finally, questions in in the second list (see Appendix 2), instead, helped us collecting information about any existing EU granted project about storytelling.

2.4. SUMMARY

In this Chapter we described the aim our two-phase research, which is actually gathering information about how storytelling applied to helping professions is considered in the different EU countries involved in the Project. Furthermore, we expressed the reason we chose a CGT-based analysis and, by doing that, we described the way we applied CGT to our data. Finally, we described the general research question, that generated a number of working questions that will be described in the next chapters.

References


3. PHASE 1: THE DESK RESEARCH

In this Chapter we provide the information gathered by the desk research about storytelling in helping professions in the EU countries involved in the Project. Data are reported as a narrative describing how storytelling is defined in the Partners’ countries and in the other EU granted projects. Later, the open coding process conducted on the data is described.

3.1. How storytelling for helping professions (e.g., social workers, psychologists, physicians, etc.) is defined in the EU countries involved in the Project

Generally speaking, the data collected by the desk research appear to describe three ways of conceiving storytelling for helping professions. More specifically storytelling is considered:

1. A set of methodologies that can be applied by the professionals in order to obtain certain results in the relationship with people at risk. The way these methodologies is used depends on the professional’s theoretical and practical stance. It seems reasonable, however, to say that a single storytelling methodology does not exist. Instead, there are as many approaches to the methodology as are the schools of thought defining them. The application of a storytelling methodology sometime defines a complete new discipline, as for the case of Narrative Medicine (Charon, 2006; Charon et al., 2016).

2. A way of thinking, influenced by Postmodernism, Social Constructivism and/or Post-Structuralism. This idea is particularly significant for those working with stories within a Narrative Practice context (White & Epston, 1990; White, 2007). Nonetheless, other approaches are inspired by such epistemologies (McLeod, 2004).

3. A profession with specific characteristics. In fact, some courses we analysed in the desk research, in fact, aim to train professional storytellers who can apply storytelling in different fields, including helping relationships. Also in this case, the criteria for defining a professional storyteller are different depending on the ideas and values pursued by the various training organizations.

A concept that seems to be significant for any of the three storytelling conceptualizations, is that a professional using storytelling should develop a number of skills and competencies helping him to provide an effective work people at risk. Such skills relate to relational and dialogical dimensions, to theoretical knowledge and to the ability of applying such knowledge to the different contexts. All the courses analysed in our desk research provide theoretical knowledge and practical training in order to help student develop those skills. Again, the skills the courses are focused on may change accordingly to the principles and values pursued by the courses, defining their conception of “storytelling”.

Considering the general criteria above mentioned, in the following paragraphs we will describe how storytelling for helping professions is defined and taught in the EU countries involved in the Project.
3.2. Slovenia

The storytelling in Slovenia is seen and considered in many different ways. It does not appear as one single discipline/method/field but it can be tracked down as part of coaching/facilitation training, communications strategies in purely commercial settings (advertising), part of social work specific skills.

There are two starting points, important for further research and explanation of positioning storytelling and its role in Slovenia. First is the language structure/linguistics itself. The Dictionary of Slovene literary language distinguishes between a “story” (zgodba\(^3\)) and “narration” (naracija\(^4\)). A story is connected directly to something that is told about real or made-up events, connected into whole. The narration itself means telling (something), also a story itself (having the gift of narration). The translation of the word “storytelling” in Slovene language is therefore possible as a combination of the above-mentioned terms but a direct translation would be “telling stories” and does not reveal the real meaning behind it. The second starting point derives from the problem of translation – may that be because of the richness of the English language or implementing a new concept that still has to find its place in Slovene terminology (as it is for example for many other contemporary words from other disciplines, where an English synonym is always used as an explanation point for the Slovene language). The latter means the term stands under risk of being either misinterpreted or used in a variety of different settings (educational/commercial/cultural etc.).

Both of the starting points are also inevitably connected to findings/desk research where storytelling (upon the above-mentioned language background) is considered in work (professional/non-formal) with people with lesser opportunities.

The most interesting finding in the field of working with personal stories is by Mojca Urek (2008), who presents the differentiation between a story and a narration. She derives from the general view or position of a story in the society, where they are both used as synonyms – narration hereby refers more to an expert type of telling a story, whereby the stories itself are considered fiction, as something that lies in the eyes of the teller and can be biased, made-up or even false. No matter the “problem” or fact of subjectivity, telling a story is autobiographic, personal interpretation of reality – personal, real life stories are in the centre of social work. Within this interpretation, the real meaning behind the position of storytelling in Slovenia lies in the very heart of social work in its broadest sense (Urek, 2008; see also question no. 6, spokespersons in round table).

Another fact, when trying to position storytelling in Slovenia, is the rich tradition of storytelling that derives from folklore heritage. Some stories cannot be tracked down to original authors but remain as a “companion” in national story culture and are being transferred from generation to generation. There is even a festival “Stories Today Festival”, going back to 1998 and its predecessor “Fairy Tale Marathon”. The festival’s aim is to bring

\(^3\) Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika (Dictionary of the Slovene literary language), 2016. Available at: http://boszrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj_testa&expression=zgodba&hs=1.

\(^4\) Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika (Dictionary of the Slovene literary language), 2016. Available at: http://boszrc-sazu.si/cgi/a03.exe?name=sskj_testa&expression=naracija&hs=1.
to life the stories from national folklore heritage (the festival takes place in the beginning of March every year\(^5\)).

The most interesting finding within this project is recording/finding that storytelling in Slovene language has a correct translation (mentioned above as \textit{zgodbarjenje}) that has found its place in the field of creative work, marketing activities, brand designing). The project findings claim, that the term is not generally embed in the researches of sociohistorical science (Bogataj et al., 2013).

According to the above-mentioned findings, storytelling in the field of working with people at risk in general is therefore in the position to yet find its way/position in this field – this was the leading thought when preparing the set of concrete questions for interviews with experts.

### 3.2.1. Storytelling courses in Slovenia

Within first cycle of studies for social work at the Faculty of social work – University of Ljubljana (bachelor degree), there is one subject with the name “Narrating and writing stories in social work” that corresponds to 4 ECTS and 100 hours of pedagogical work\(^6\).

At the same point, another two subjects/courses correspond with storytelling within a joint doctoral study conducted between Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Social science, Theological faculty, Academy of theatre, radio, film and television and Faculty of Social work – all at University of Ljubljana. One course covers the “Psychology of communication” where the emphasis lies on a story as a narrative, and how to “recognize ideological, controlled and prejudice discourse”. “Story” as such is here also a part of Developmental/Evolutionary psychology as a specific form of person’s communication/expression\(^7\).

We identified only one course with elements of storytelling in the field of interpretation of cultural heritage. It is performed by “Žive Legende” (Live Legends), an NGO that leads to a certification from the side of “Interpret Europe” (European association for Heritage Interpretation). The methodology mainly derives from ethnology and importance of interpretation and takes approximately 40 hours of education and a final test\(^8\).

### 3.2.2. Possible future scenarios for storytelling in Slovenia

Storytelling in Slovenia is not a recognized profession in terms of gaining a specific certification or as a renowned occupation/vocation/profession. Generally, there is always the possibility to set up a round table about the possibility of making storytelling with people at risk an acknowledged profession, or, alternatively, creating a storytelling training which could be acknowledged. Considering Slovenian context, the spokespersons that could be involved in this round table are:

\(^5\) [http://www.pravljicedanes.si/](http://www.pravljicedanes.si/)
\(^6\) [https://www.fsd.uni-lj.si/en/study/undergraduate_study/programme/](https://www.fsd.uni-lj.si/en/study/undergraduate_study/programme/)
\(^7\) [https://www.fsd.uni-lj.si/en/study/graduate_studies/doctoral_programme/indosow/](https://www.fsd.uni-lj.si/en/study/graduate_studies/doctoral_programme/indosow/)
• Vocational schools: VET teachers from various fields (e.g., psychology)

• Faculties: Faculty for social work, Pedagogical faculties, Private HE institutions with emphasis on social work/social management/interdisciplinary studies (health/social studies)

• National centres for social work: mainly professional workers who are specified in working with people at risk (family/youth department)

• National employment centres: in the field of career orientation and workshops for unemployed or hard to employ persons.

• Career centres of public/private faculties: for both the trainers and students.

• Public/Private bodies: e.g., Social Chamber, NGOs/Private institutions covering the field of youth, social care, mental health, etc., Association of facilitators, etc., private facilitators and coaches, regional development agencies, private foundations, etc.

However, the round table should be organized with a clear message of what is to be achieved with the profession and who is to be addressed with this specific knowledge. One would have to start by identifying the possibilities of recognizing “Storytelling” within two points:

- Non-formal education settings (a good starting point but with no clear outcome in terms of recognition among main final beneficiaries) in terms of upgrading the previous formal education.

- Formal educational settings (vocational schools for medicine, faculties – pedagogical staff, nurses, psychologists, etc.).

Some professions in Slovenia are much regulated in terms of concrete working positions in, for example, public sector and also in private sector, whenever there is a concession of a public task into the private sector.

Setting up a round table with Slovenian institutions and organizations about storytelling in helping professions could be facilitated by presenting examples coming from other countries. Having the storytelling professionals from most equipped countries in this field could work/influence the already mentioned regulated professions (including a new perspective in work with people).

3.3. Austria

If we ask people in Austria about “storytelling” – without translation in German – most of them would ask us what we are meaning with that. It is not really about not understanding the English word. It is more about not knowing if it means the same than in German and the uncertainty if there is not a second or a third meaning behind. The direct translation of “storytelling” in German is “Geschichten erzählen”, or as the person who tells the story “Geschichtenerzähler”. These words are understood in everyday German in the literal meaning: a person who tells (interesting) stories. Thus, a desk research focused on the term “storytelling” in Austrian territory usually provides courses offering this type of training, where usually no mention about helping relationships and health care is made.
Most common in Austria is storytelling as telling stories, that means telling fairy tales, myths, regional stories. There is a long tradition of this kind of storytelling in Austria. Since 1988 (with gaps) there is a big international festival called “Graz erzählt” (“Graz tells”)9. This festival invites international storytellers to tell their stories. In the meantime, stories are not only told orally, they are also danced and acted. This festival is said to be Europe’s biggest storytelling event. From our desk research, we discovered that at least 10 professional storytellers live in Austria making their living with this “profession”.

In the last 20 years, storytelling in Austria also has become a well-known tool in media. It is used as tool/method to sell a product, a service, information. For this kind of storytelling there are several (non-certified) training in all kinds of contexts (business, politics, etc.).

In the counselling and coaching field, storytelling has become increasingly important. It is seen as one of many tools helping people and organizations. The training are seen as additional qualification trainers/coaches can obtain. Storytelling is also used in psychotherapy as an additional tool that is taught in training. The term Storytelling interferes with the term “Narrative Psychologie”. However, there seem to be no psychotherapists centering their work on storytelling.

Finally, storytelling in Austria is applied in the educational field. Especially in kindergartens and primary schools.

Even if storytelling is applied in some social, psychological and coaching contexts, we found no comprehensive training for helping and health professions. It seems that a culture of working with stories as a way of helping people at risk must be established. Nonetheless, there is some level of interest on the topic. In Phase 2 (see. Chapter 4) we actually interviewed some professionals that have been thinking for a while about how, when and where to apply storytelling in their work.

In Austria professions are regulated quite strictly. An approval of storytelling as a new profession is therefore in near future not realistic. Given this situation, probably the most useful way to introduce a training in storytelling dedicated to professionals working with people at risk is to develop a course focused on the quality of its content and learning unit alone, without considering any accreditation of sort. As time passes by, and if this kind of training gathers some success, it could be possible to think to submit it to an accreditation process. Such process can be granted either by public or by private bodies. Public bodies that could be involved are:

- Österreichische Wirtschaftskammer (Austrian Economic Chamber)
- Österreichische Arbeiterkammer (Austrian Chamber of Labour)
- Österreichsche Ärztekammer (Austrian Medical Chamber)

Among the private bodies that could be contacted, we could cite:

- Föderation Österreichischer Psychologenvereinigungen (Federation of Austrian Associations of Psychology)

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9 http://www.graz-storytellingfestival.at/
3.4. Spain

Storytelling in Spain is not a recognized profession. It is generally described with the term “cuenta cuentos” or “telling stories”, as such in the perception of the general public it is something which is related to telling fairy-tales to children or to telling folk stories as part of local history. It appears there are two important storytelling associations. The first one is called AEDA\textsuperscript{10}, which aims to improve the situation of storytellers and storytelling, as well as spreading a love for the profession. The second association was born is the Spanish Association for Storytelling, created in November 2016, that aims to certificate professional storytelling. According to their website, a 150-hour training course should be attended to obtain such certificate. However, this certification has not been implemented yet and the initiative is purely private.

As a methodology, storytelling and narrative techniques are most extended in the business world and in politics. They are seen as a way to get a message across, to sell a product or service or to create affinity with a brand. As such it is widely used and extended in the area of marketing and sales, for instance many publicity and branding companies now refer to their services (or event themselves) as storytellers.

A relevant information for the aim of the Project is that storytelling with people at risk seems not to be considered as a specific methodology in Spain. However, the Ministry of Education recognizes storytelling as valuable skill for teachers. Usually, Spanish universities organize courses including storytelling destined to teachers, which are homologated by Ministry of Education and recognized as merits for the access exams for public bodies. For instance, there is a course on “Certificación Universitaria de Cuentos en Educación Infantil” (University certificate on stories for childhood education) that is homologated by the Ministry of Education for these merits for those in public teaching positions\textsuperscript{11}. Teachers can take into account the courses because they give the access to public job (through the exam) or to internal promotion. However, this is only so for those recognized (homologated) by the Ministry of Education.

Since the process of for acknowledgement of a new profession or specialization is relatively long in Spain, a round table to discuss these possibilities and start working on the

\textsuperscript{10}http://narracionoral.es/index.php/en/home-2
\textsuperscript{11}http://www.formacionpermanentedelprofesorado.es/Talleres-Rincones-Juegos-Cuentacuentos-Infantil.
steps to take for this recognition is a must if, in the future, it is to be recognized. We believe that, for the beginning, it could be helpful to set up an informal working group, as for a formal recognition there are several conditions required with regard to participating bodies and conditions. It would be easier to involve them with a concrete action plan and a set of ideas on the profession, so as to demonstrate the relevance of the acknowledgement. However, one has to bear in mind that the educational competences are transferred to the autonomous communities, who work within the framework of the national curriculum and qualifications. This implicates effort on national level and in each of the autonomous regions, the acknowledgment is done on national level but the execution and inclusion into the regular educational and training system is done by the autonomous communities.

For the informal work on laying the foundations for starting up the formal recognition process, the spokespersons to be involved would be a mix of the following types:

- Those working with storytelling techniques already, i.e. the storytellers themselves and organizations and companies using these techniques.
- Those involved in providing homologated training and courses, i.e. educational bodies, private centers and their teachers/trainers.
- Those responsible for educational policy on national and regional level.
- Trade unions.

We also believe that, during the informal work, it could be useful to inform the spokespersons about how storytelling is considered in other countries. Considering our desk research, UK’s experience appears extremely relevant as an example (see par. 3.7).

3.5. Italy

Storytelling is not a publicly regulated profession in Italy. According to Italian Law, public regulated professions are “[...] based on the following building blocks: a) the definition of the tasks totally, or partially, reserved to each professional group; b) the imposition of minimum educational standards; c) the specification of the conditions of access to the profession: a public examination and (in some cases) a period of training; d) the recognition by the state of the representative, self-governing bodies of the various professions (the ‘Orders’) and the delegation to them of a wide range of responsibilities, such as the elaboration of ethical codes and the sanctioning of their members” (Brosio, 1997, p. 8). Considering this, in Italy we may find training organized by universities, as well as private organizations. Some of these courses consider storytelling a methodology to be taught in order to enrich the professional’s communication and caring skills. It can be taught in dedicated training, or as a subject within a broader course. In other cases, some courses provide a certificate of “professional storyteller”, but, due to this non-regulation condition, the criteria defining what “professional” is related to storytelling may vary.

Among the different helping professions, Italian physicians appear to be more and more sensitive to the topic. Narrative Based Medicine (NBM; Charon, 2006, 2016), an emerging discipline using storytelling in the cure process, has started to attract some kind of interest in the last few years. At the moment, there are two important organizations promoting NBM in
Italy: SIMeN – Società Italiana di Medicina Narrativa\(^\text{12}\) (Italian Society of Narrative Medicine) and Fondazione ISTUD\(^\text{13}\). Both of them aim to disseminate contents and information on NBM, with a special focus on interdisciplinary dialogue and organization of courses, workshops and congresses. Moreover, both of them give the possibility to subscribe to a newsletter, in order to keep people updated about news and activities regarding NBM on a national and international level. It is interesting to note that both organizations have different connections with Italian and international universities and involve different academic researchers in their ranks. Fondazione ISTUD organizes a Master\(^\text{14}\) in Narrative Medicine in collaboration with SIMeN. In 2016, the Master has arrived to the fifth edition and involves trainers from Italy, France, Germany and USA. It consists in 60 hours of lessons divided in three modules of three days each, and 76 hours of distance tutorship.

Another course in NBM is organised by LUA – Libera Università dell’Autobiografia\(^\text{15}\) (Free University of Autobiography). It is a summer training called “Narrazione, Scrittura, Autobiografia in Medicina” (“Narrative, Writing, Autobiography in Medicine”) based on Demetrio’s autobiography method (Demetrio, 1996, 2003, 2008). Beneficiaries of the training are all kind of health professions (physicians, nurses, psychologists, etc.).

Aside from the summer school in NBM, LUA also organizes other courses inspired by Demetrio’s methodology. Among them, the most relevant for the aim of the Project is “Mnemosyne”, a three-year training in autobiographic and biographic writing. Students attending “Mnemosyne” training obtain a certificate of “Expert in autobiographic methodologies” and are defined by LUA as a sort of educators helping people narrating themselves by using creativity, games and exercises. It is worth noting that LUA is a body accredited by Italian National Board of Social Workers. Consequently, Italian social workers can attend LUA’s courses for their continuous vocational training.

Storytelling seems fragmentary in nature in the context of Italian psychology and disciplines that are in some ways related to it (coaching, counselling, psychotherapy, social work). Demetrio’s autobiographic approach is probably the most known, but there are some others. Such models are inspired in some ways by psychodynamic or cognitivist approaches (Mittino, 2013) and have influenced the work of some Italian psychologists, counsellors, coaches and psychiatrists.

Storytelling in the field of psychology is often taught as a methodology within broader training in psychotherapy. In Italy, psychotherapy is considered a specialization of psychology and medicine, both of them being publicly regulated professions. In order to obtain such specialization, psychologists and physicians need to attend a School of Specialization in Psychotherapy, i.e. an academic or a private organization accredited by MIUR, providing an at least 4-year long training. Nowadays, professionals can choose among a list of more than 300 Schools\(^\text{16}\) with different approaches. From our desk research, it

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\(^{12}\) [http://www.medicinanarrativa.it](http://www.medicinanarrativa.it).

\(^{13}\) [http://www.medicinanarrativa.eu](http://www.medicinanarrativa.eu).

\(^{14}\) In Italy, the word “master” is commonly referred to a postgraduate specialization. Masters organized by universities are usually developed according educational criteria established by MIUR – Ministero dell'Istruzione e della Ricerca (Italian Ministry of Education and Research), and are consequently recognized by it. ISTUD’s Master in Narrative Medicine, however, does not seem to meet MIUR's criteria.

\(^{15}\) [http://www.lua.it](http://www.lua.it).

\(^{16}\) A complete list, updated to 13th December 2016, is available at:
appears that most of the Schools proposing lessons on storytelling are inspired by psychodynamic, systemic or constructivist/postmodern approach.

Storytelling in Italy is also applied in the professional coaching field. Mostly, it is used as corporate storytelling in order to help professionals and company to improve their brand communication (Fontana et al., 2010; Fontana, 2016). Thus considered, the work of “Osservatorio Storytelling”\(^\text{17}\), an association related to University of Pavia, seems interesting for the aim of our Project. The association proposes a training called “Narrability Labs”, where they teach storytelling with focus on different aspects. The contents proposed in this training seem to be applicable to different contexts, even the work with people at risk. The training is structured in 7+1 workshops, that can also be attended individually. Interestingly, it appears that professionals attending the whole training course learn storytelling as a way of thinking: the titles of some workshops seem explanatory in that sense\(^\text{18}\).

There are also some organizations providing courses inspired in some ways by White & Epston’s Narrative Practice, which, as we stressed before (see. Par. 1.3.), is an important theoretical influence for our Project. Among them, it is worth noting the activity of CAM – Centro di Ascolto Uomini Maltrattanti\(^\text{19}\) (Counselling Centre for Men Perpetrating Violence), an association founded in 2009 and based in different Italian towns, which trains health and helping professionals in a specific method of working in the field of domestic violence. This method integrates different ideas and approaches about domestic violence. Considering Narrative Practice, it seems influenced by White’s work with abusive men (White, 1992).

Some Italian clinicians and social workers apply storytelling as a performance art in their work. Live-performance storytelling (Zipes, 1995; Mello, 2001) is mostly used in school and community counselling with youth at risk, as well as in specific medical contexts like paediatric and cancer hospital wards. This type of storytelling is often applied with the help of a professional storyteller who studied this specific performance art. Italy’s association “Raccontamiunastoria”\(^\text{20}\), which is a member of FIST - Federazione Italiana di Storytelling (Italian Federation of Storytelling), for instance, is an organization proposing courses and workshops in live-performance storytelling, which are recognized by FEST – Federation for European Storytelling\(^\text{21}\) and are opened all kind of professions. The teaching units of these courses focus also on non-verbal communication skills (use of vocal tone, proxemics, etc.) and on the ability of choosing “the right story in the right time” (McCullum Baldasaro et al., 2014).

Another organization working in the field of performance storytelling is Centro Italiano di Storytelling (Italian Storytelling Centre)\(^\text{22}\), which is partner of UK’s International School of Storytelling. As for 2017, this organization provides three courses: “La Dolce Vita Storytelling”, “Telling Dante” and “The Nature of This Moment”. The latter seems quite interesting for the purpose of this Project, as it aims to help people “[…] regaining the sense

\(^{17}\) http://www.storytellinglab.org/
\(^{19}\) http://www.centrouominimaltrattanti.org/
\(^{20}\) http://www.raccontamiunastoria.com
\(^{21}\) http://www.fest-network.eu/
\(^{22}\) http://www.italianstorytellingcenter.it/en/
of our interconnectedness, we will open doors to creativity, joy and inspiration to serve the
greater whole while bringing our unique gifts to any situation."\(^{23}\)

### 3.5.1. Possible future scenarios for storytelling in Italy

We already mentioned that storytelling needs to be implemented in the psychosocial context, where it is very fragmentary in nature. Relatively few Italian professionals in this field are aware of the implications and potentialities of storytelling and narrative approaches in the work with people at risk. Storytelling training focused on psychological, therapeutic and/or pedagogical issues and specifically dedicated to psychosocial professions would probably raise more interest on the topic.

Considering the specific context of Italian psychology, a problem could rise with the beneficiaries of these trainings. Italian psychologists enjoy a public regulation: that means, for instance, that there is a representative, self-governing bodies (the National Board of Psychologists), which is delegated of a wide range of responsibilities, such as the elaboration of ethical codes and the sanctioning of their members (Brosio, 1997). However, in Italy there are some non-regulated professions (namely, “counsellors” and “life coaches”) that in recent years have been being at the centre of a harsh debate: in fact, they have been accused by some psychologists of professional fraud, because their skills as well as their marketing niches seemingly overlap the psychologists’ ones. Thus, the organization proposing a training in storytelling including psychological and therapeutic issues should take this situation into account, as it obliges to take a position about whether opening the course to those non-regulated, psychology-related professions, or not.

As for the recognition of these courses, it would be possible to ask public institutions for accreditation, which is different in nature according to the public body involved. For instance, the Italian Board of Psychologists and/or the Italian Board of Social Workers could recognize a course in storytelling as a valid vocational training for psychologists and/or social workers (in this case, the organization providing the course could follow LUA’s example, see par. 3.5). Moreover, MIUR could recognize the training as an academic master course if it is organized in collaboration with some university and, at the same time, it respects specific educational criteria.

In any case, considering either our desk research or the data collected by the interviews with Italian expert storyteller (see Chapter 4), it seems that the most important aspects to be focused on in order to develop an effective and attractive course in storytelling with people at risk in Italy, should be related to the training content, the quality of the learning units and the expertise of the trainers.

### 3.6. The Netherlands

Storytelling in The Netherlands is used in different contexts and with different aims. There are several public and private organizations working with stories and providing courses on the

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topic. There is also a growing interest in professional performance storytelling, which is not regulated by Dutch government.

Usually, the courses described below offer certificates that are not acknowledged by Dutch government. However, some of these courses are recognized but private professional bodies.

Many storytelling courses are destined for business and trade professionals, but include learning units that could be useful for coaches and other helping professions. An interesting example is the training called “The power of storytelling”\(^\text{24}\), organized by the University of Rotterdam. It is a one-day course that, especially in its first half, focuses on general topics regarding storytelling (“neurology and storytelling”, “storytelling as social lubricant”, etc.) that could be of particular interest for psychosocial and health workers. In combination to “The power of storytelling”, the University of Rotterdam offers a 2-day course called “The power of presence”\(^\text{25}\), which aims to help students developing skills in non-verbal communication, in order to explore active and effective ways of expressing who they are, and what message they want to convey. Another example of these types of training are the “Masterclasses” by StoryVenture\(^\text{26}\). Masterclasses are structured in six half days distributed over 6 months, and aim to teach storytelling to managers, human resources, consultants, coaches useful for individual and group work. Usually, participants in the above-mentioned courses are granted with certificates of attendance. However, these certificates are not acknowledged by Dutch government.

In the field of professional live-performance storytelling, there are several courses proposing contents that could be applied in the work with people at risk. One of these is called “Verteltraining” (“Training in storytelling) and is organized by De Nationale Vertelschool (The National School of Storytelling)\(^\text{27}\). It is a 15-lesson training investigating all kinds of stories playfully. The training offer exercises aimed at relaxation, concentration, presence, imagination, contact with the audience and use of silence. The aim is letting participants immerse in characters, dialogues and the use of space. Other interesting trainings are those organized by Mezrab Storytelling School\(^\text{28}\), providing three courses (“introduction”, “next step” and “professional”), which aim to lead students from the basics of performance storytelling to its application in different contexts and with different people. Finally, it is worth noting the training offered by “De Vertelacademie” (“The Academy of Storytelling)\(^\text{29}\) which organizes a basic and an in-depth course (4-day training each).

Considering psychosocial professions, an organization providing training in storytelling is Stichting Vertellen (Storytelling Foundation)\(^\text{30}\). It offers courses focused on specific techniques – such as “Story Circle” (Frühmann et al., 2016) – as well as training on the use of storytelling with specific communities (e.g., elderly people). Beneficiaries are professionals who want to set up a story project, and for people that are already working on that and are looking for deepening and exchange in working with life stories. Another organization worth

\(^{24}\) http://bit.ly/2gTTWpv
\(^{26}\) http://www.storyventures.nl
\(^{27}\) http://bit.ly/2gU24qk
\(^{28}\) http://mezrabstorytellingschool.nl
\(^{29}\) http://www.vertelacademie.nl/
\(^{30}\) http://www.stichtingvertellen.nl
noting is DISC – Dutch International Storytelling Centre\(^{31}\), which offers several short courses (1, 2 or 4-day long) on different topics (e.g., storytelling in classroom, storytelling in community work, the use of voice in storytelling, etc.).

The Storytelling Centre of Amsterdam\(^{32}\) is another private company focused on storytelling in psychosocial context, providing two types of training. The first one (“participants” level) is dedicated to people who want to become acquainted with storytelling, and want to discover storytelling for personal development. The second level (“professional” level) is aimed at the education of professionals who want to employ storytelling in their work (e.g. work at schools or work with youngsters, elderly people, etc.). For both levels the Centre has developed a number of modules, each with objectives and results of their own. Last interesting private organization for the aim of our Project is the International School of Storytelling and Peace\(^{33}\), which organizes a number of workshops and courses a year to train people using storytelling as a technique for the solution of conflicts. The School also initiates intercultural projects for communities. These initiatives are often international (in conflict regions), but also train people within their own communities.

Considering the specific field of postmodern approach and Narrative Practice, we found three vocational courses. The first is organized by “Narrative Therapie”, a one-man enterprise run by Johan Van De Putte\(^{34}\), which offers a course in Narrative Therapy (4 modules of 2 days each). The certificate obtained by this course is not accredited by any governmental organization. The second course is provided by CIVAS\(^{35}\) and consists in an online training in Narrative Therapy structured in 12 lessons, where students can learn the principle and ideas of this approach, as well as its basic techniques and methodologies. The course is for helping and health professions, like counsellors, coaches, therapists, nurses, etc., and also allows to obtain ECTS\(^{36}\). A third course worth noting is the one provided by RINO Groep, called “Narratieve systeemtherapie” (“Narrative Systemic Therapy”), a vocational training opened only to the therapists that have already attended the course called “NVRG Hoofdcursus Systeemtherapie”, a training in systemic therapy which acknowledged by NVRG – Nederlandse Vereniging voor Relatie en Gezintherapie (Dutch Association for

\(^{31}\)http://www.discstorytelling.com
\(^{32}\)http://storytelling-centre.nl
\(^{33}\)http://storytelling-centre.nl/issp
\(^{34}\)http://www.narratievetherapie.nl/
\(^{35}\)https://www.civas.nl/cursus/narratieve-therapie
\(^{36}\)The ECTS grading scale is a grading system defined in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) framework by the European Commission. Since many grading systems co-exist in Europe and, considering that interpretation of grades varies considerably from one country to another, if not from one institution to another, the ECTS grading scale has been developed to provide a common measure and facilitate the transfer of students and their grades between European higher education institutions, by allowing national and local grading systems to be interchangeable. Grades are reported on a carefully calibrated and uniform A-to-F scale combined with keywords and short qualitative definitions. Each institution makes its own decision on how to apply the ECTS grading scale to its system. The ECTS grade is not meant to replace the local grades but to be used optionally and additionally to effectively "translate" and "transcript" a grade from one institution to another. The ECTS grade is indicated alongside the mark awarded by the host institution on the student's transcript of records. The receiving institutions then convert the ECTS grade to their own system. Higher education institutions are recommended (though not forced) to provide ECTS grades for all of their students and to take into account the ECTS grades awarded by other institutions. A certain amount of flexibility is advised, since the ECTS grading scale was designed to improve transparency of a variety of grading systems and cannot, by itself, cover all possible cases. More information at: http://www2.crui.it/crui/ects/english/index.htm.
Relational and Family Therapy) and NVvP – Nederlandse Vereniging voor Psychiatrie (Dutch Association for Psychiatry). Both NVRG and NVvP are private associations.

Finally, we found an academic course in Narrative Psychology provided by University of Twente\(^\text{37}\). The course puts particular emphasis on the application of postmodern and social constructivist ideas in psychology, and is considered as a possible route in the academic curriculum for bachelor students in the Faculty of Psychology.

### 3.6.1. Storytelling and accreditation system in The Netherlands

Overall, the offered courses can be seen as continued education, or in-service training for professionals (on different levels, e.g. HET, academic, etc.). All the accreditations given by these trainings – except for the academic course in Narrative Psychology – are acknowledged by private bodies. In order to get such accreditations, all the courses have usually to be proposed to these institutions. The institutions decide according to their guidelines, how many “points” students can earn on what level.

Thus considered, if we want to deliver a training in storytelling with people at risk in Dutch territory, we should probably act according to this system. More specifically, we should rely on the idea that accreditation bodies are actually private organizations playing a key role in Dutch society, as they are considered warrants of quality in vocational and professional training. Consequently, if we want to get an accreditation, we should submit our course program to these institutions. Here is a list of the accreditation bodies that could be contacted:

- NVRG = Nederlandse Vereniging voor Relatie- en Gezinstitherapie (Dutch Association for Relational and Family Therapy)
- NVvP = Nederlandse Vereniging voor Psychiatrie (Dutch Association for Psychiatry)
- ABC – Algemene Beroepsvereniging voor Counseling (Professional Association for Counseling)
- BATC - Belangenassociatie Therapeut en Consument (Interest Association Therapist and Consumer)
- VBAG – Vereniging ter Bevordering van Alternatieve Geneeswijzen (Association for the Promotion of Alternative Medicine).

Given the characteristics and the aim of our Project, we believe that such institutions could be helpful to disseminate our training and the results of our research in The Netherlands.

### 3.7. UK

The term “storytelling” has many meanings and definitions in UK. It is used in several areas: community work, schools, business and corporate contexts, psychological and social work, health care. It is considered a both a set of methods, and a profession with specific characteristics.

\(^{37}\) [http://www.levensverhalenlab.nl/site/Trainingen/?aanbod=2](http://www.levensverhalenlab.nl/site/Trainingen/?aanbod=2)
Actually, professional performance storytelling seems to be very widespread. It is worth noting that storytelling as a profession is not regulated in UK. Consequently, every organization providing training on this subject has established its own criteria about what “professional storytelling” is. Among these, one of the most famous is the International School of Storytelling\(^{38}\). It provides short courses, as well as longer and intensive training in storytelling, usually opened either to professional storyteller, or to beginners. Interestingly most of these courses include training in order to help participants practice the skills and techniques learnt in class in their professional field.

Another famous organization is SFS – Society For Storytelling\(^{39}\). It organizes several events aimed to spread the culture of oral storytelling all around UK. Two of such events seem particularly interesting: the National Storytelling Week and the Gathering Workshops (in collaboration with Plymouth University). The former takes place in storytelling clubs, theatres, museums, schools, hospitals, spoken word venues, and care homes, and is addressed to audiences of all ages. The latter is a 3-day event with workshops focused on different topics regarding storytelling and its use with different type of audience.

Considering storytelling as a methodology in helping and health professions, it is worth noting the post-graduated module called “Narrative and Medicine” organized by the King’s College of London\(^{40}\). It explores the various ways in which arrangements of information, encoded in language and/or gesture, can be conceptualised as narratives, for example, by literary theory, ethnography, qualitative studies methodologies and narrative medicine. Elements to be explored through in-depth study of a growing canon within narrative studies in medicine include: the storied nature of symptoms and representations of patient experience in clinical literature and case reports; the validity of interface metaphors and similes such as ‘disease as text’, ‘patient as text’ and ‘diagnosis as a form of close reading’; the intellectual coherence of the conjunction and juxtaposition of narrative and medicine.

In the field of psychology, therapy and social work, we found of particular interest two approaches to storytelling. The former is proposed by David England\(^{41}\), a storyteller and psychotherapist providing several workshops for using storytelling with early age children, primary age children, adults and families. He also provides a one weekday course for teachers titled “Storytelling for sustainability”, where participants learn how to use traditional stories which highlight these questions on the issues of sustainability. England’s approach relies on the use of traditional and folk stories to stimulate change in the person’s life. He collaborates with SFS and has proposed some guidelines for the use of storytelling in psychotherapy, counselling and coaching\(^{42}\).

Another interesting approach in storytelling applied to psychology and social work is from Rob Parkinson, a storyteller and psychotherapist providing several trainings with his company Imaginary Journeys\(^{43}\). Among the courses, the one called “Storytelling & therapy / counselling”, aims to introduce counsellors and therapists to the use of stories and story-crafting in their work. Parkinson’s approach seems to be inspired by solution focused brief
therapy (De Shazer, 1985), an approach that shares more than a similarity with Narrative Therapy.

Speaking of Narrative Therapy, an important organization providing training on the topic is the Institute of Narrative Therapy. The course is organized in 3 levels, at the end of which participants can obtain a “Diploma in Narrative Therapy”, which is recognized by the Dulwich Centre and the University of Melbourne, but is not acknowledged by UK government.

3.7.1. Accreditation bodies for training courses in storytelling

As we already stressed, storytelling is not an acknowledged profession in UK. Training in professional performance storytelling are recognized by private association (like the above-mentioned SFS, or the International School of Storytelling), if the course program meet their criteria.

Keeping on track with performance storytelling, schools and adult educational centres make use of Qualifications in “Storytelling” and “Performance” which are offered at UK Levels 1 and 2 by the Open College Network (Northern Ireland) and by the National Open College Network across the whole of the UK. The qualifications offered do not make a storyteller/performer a professional, rather they are aimed at giving learners confidence to speak in public; to self-evaluate and to appear in drama.

Considering the specific context of storytelling with people at risk, accreditation for a course on the topic can be granted by public or private bodies, depending on the professional categories to be involved as beneficiaries. Public institutions that could be contacted for accreditation could be:

- BPS – British Psychological Society
- NMC – Nursing and Midwifery Council
- GMC – General Medical Council
- HCPC – Health Care and Professions Council

Private accreditation for psychotherapists and counsellors could be granted, on a national level, by BACP – British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, NCS – National Counselling Society and UKCP – United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy.

3.8. EU life-long learning projects on storytelling

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44. [http://www.theinstituteofnarrativetherapy.com/](http://www.theinstituteofnarrativetherapy.com/)
45. Dulwich Centre is an independent centre in Adelaide, Australia involved in narrative approaches to therapy and community work, training, publishing, supporting practitioners in different parts of the world, and co-hosting international conferences. It is actually the place where Narrative Therapy was born. More information at: [http://dulwichcentre.com.au](http://dulwichcentre.com.au)
46. [https://www.ocnni.org.uk](https://www.ocnni.org.uk)
47. [http://www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)
From our desk research, we found a number of EU granted projects about storytelling. We focused on those projects using storytelling as an educational tool, or as a tool to empower people and communities. Considering these projects, we can conclude that no other EU life-long learning projects is focused on the specific field of storytelling with people at risk.

3.8.1. Sheherazade

The first project we found is called “Sheherazade, 1001 stories for adult learning”48. The project started in 2011 and ended in 2013. The Sheherazade partners were geographical spreading in France, Belgium, Austria, Ireland, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Sweden and Norway. Objectives of the project were:

1. To raise awareness of the potential of storytelling and to promote storytelling as an educational tool in different fields of formal and non-formal adult education
2. To develop new methodologies and materials for using stories and storytelling in adult teaching and learning
3. To test these innovative approaches and new content and include them in initial and in-service teacher training courses
4. To promote stories and storytelling as part of formal and non-formal adult training
5. To make resources for storytelling available
6. To introduce storytelling in formal and non-formal adult learning

The most relevant outcome of this project was the development of a 4-dimension methodological approach to apply storytelling as a pedagogical tool. The dimensions considered are:

- Preparation and warm-up
- Technical activities
- Workshop telling
- Performance

3.8.2. FALESAF

The project FALESAF - Fostering Adult Learner Empowerment through storytelling and folklore, was a project that supported the dialogue between generations and cultures; knowledge and experience of adult learners was extended through the telling of stories and local folklore. Five partners from different European countries – Bulgaria, UK, Iceland, Ireland and Germany – organized workshops, training courses and events around legends, fairy tales and other stories. The project’s aim was to provide access to learning for older citizens, enabling them to become story-tellers themselves, by connecting with younger citizens (through inter-generational dialogue), gaining knowledge of their own culture, traditions and region (supporting their journey back into education) and promote active citizenship.

48 http://www.sheherazade.eu
The consortium developed a free online “Education Pack” for storytelling, incorporating techniques, case studies, and examples of methods/stories/art/interpretation for learners, which has been applied to teach storytelling to elderly people. Results include increased mobility for adult learners; new skills and experience gained; increased confidence to re-engage in education and actively engage in society; preservation of cultural heritage; promotion of Active Ageing; increased cross-cultural awareness.

3.8.3. **TALES**

The project TALES – Stories for Learning in European Schools⁴⁹ has been run from 2013 to 2015 by a consortium of organizations coming from UK, Belgium, Italy, Estonia, Austria, Portugal, and The Netherlands. Its mission was to investigate the impact of oral and digital storytelling in formal education and to create a set of cognitive tools to empower teachers to introduce storytelling into their practice effectively. TALES wanted to create an innovative educational approach to be introduced and applied Europe wide. The main aim of the project was to develop new teaching methods and materials involving storytelling and include them as innovative approach and new content in initial and in-service teacher training courses.

Within the frames of this project an authoring tool for digital storytelling, titled “1001 voices” was created. This tool can be applied in order to create a multimedia narrative in the context of primary, junior high and/or high schools.

3.8.4. **The Stranger**

The Stranger – Storytelling as a method for developing dialogues between majorities and minorities⁵⁰, was a project involving organizations from four countries (Italy, Turkey, Norway and UK) intending to challenge xenophobia and social exclusion in Europe by collecting and using as a method for improving dialogue between the majority population and ethnic minorities. Stories were collected and exchanged between the four partner countries and used to develop dialogues in the local settings where the partners operated. All the partners of the project produced a Booklet about the project, in English, to disseminate results of project and what they did during the project.

3.8.5. **RSRC**

The project titled RSRC – Raising Strong and Resilient Communities⁵¹ was run by a consortium of 9 partners coming form 9 EU countries (Finland, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Romania, UK, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Denmark) from 2014 to 2016. The aim was to develop a set of educational tools that can be used in adult education (with an emphasis on non-formal adult education), focusing on active citizenship and participation. These tools are based on existing and the further expansion of developed approaches, theories and methods of

⁴⁹ [http://www.storiesforlearning.eu](http://www.storiesforlearning.eu)
⁵⁰ [http://www.thestranger.eu](http://www.thestranger.eu)
⁵¹ [http://rsrceu](http://rsrceu)
storytelling (e.g., Participatory Narrative Inquiry, Participatory Learning in Action, Community & Network Mapping), guidelines and courses to help communities coping with present and imagined and feasible future situations.

Partners developed a manual describing a storytelling and narrative approach to community work, and two intensive practice-oriented courses for (future) community workers, volunteers, initiators and trainers, inspired by such approach. The manual also shows the results of an analysis of the impact of this approach in the local settings were the partners operated.

3.8.6. Writing beyond the Silence

The project “Writing beyond the Silence: Promoting autobiographical writing competences to help survivors of gender violence”\(^{52}\) has been developed with the support of the EU Daphne Program and involved four organizations from three different countries: Italy, Portugal and Greece.

The aim of the project was to train professionals in order to promote the use of autobiographical writing in anti-violence centres and in other support providing facilities. It also verifies to what extent this approach is useful and provides benefits to the women who have experienced violence, monitoring the effects of this practice in terms of psychological and emotional wellbeing. The professionals working in victim support services for women of Greece, Italy and Portugal were trained to use the autobiographical method with the aim of improving their skills and provide them with instruments to be able to act as “facilitators” in individual or group autobiographical writing interventions.

Results of the project show that the training provided during the project has increased the competence of the professionals working in victims’ support services in the autobiographical method, which has turned out to be a useful and effective tool to increase self-awareness and self-esteem in women victims of violence. The women involved as beneficiaries in the project in all of the three EU countries had the opportunity to rethink themselves: the provided autobiographical tools have been supportive of an empowerment process, strengthening their future-planning skills.

3.9. Open coding in Phase 1

The coding process on the data collected from the desk research was conducted with the purpose of constructing useful underlying concepts that could be combined with the codes from the interviews. In par. 2.3. we stressed that we developed two set of questions from the implications of the research question, which we used as guiding lines for the data collection in both phases of our research. Once we collected the data from the desk research, such implications led us to develop two working questions, in order to proceed with the open coding. Such working questions are:

What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?

How do the course and the projects solve these issues?

Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?

These questions were strictly connected to the research questions, because, as already explained in Part A of this Manual, the basic aim of this Project is to develop a training destined to helping and health professions, which provides useful skills that can be applied efficiently in all of the 6 countries involved in the Project (and, perhaps, all over the EU territory). Thus, answering to these questions also meant creating a way to answer the research questions. Consequently, the open coding helped us to maintain the data we thought to be useful to answer to the research questions. The following tables describe the codes constructed by each partner:

### OZARA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Skills to be developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fragmentation of professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do the course and the projects solve these issues?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Empowerment of professional communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Storytelling applied to specific fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of a clear linguistic position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Open codes proposed by OZARA d.o.o.

### BBRZ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Improve the use of storytelling as a tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Variety of application of storytelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do the course and the projects solve these issues?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Defining what storytelling is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Defining the fields where storytelling can be applied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Storytelling is seen as a tool to be integrated with other professional skills and competencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Open codes proposed by BBRZ

### EOLAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of knowledge about storytelling and narrative practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need for training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do the course and the projects solve these issues?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Developing soft skills and the “right” attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Importance of continuing education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.3. Open codes proposed by EOLAS S.L.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIPOSMS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?** | • Fragmentation of storytelling  
• Beneficiaries of the courses |
| **How do the course and the projects solve these issues?** | • Definition of storytelling  
• Definition of skills to be developed  
• Type of certification to be provided |
| **Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?** | • Importance of practice |
| **Total codes** | 4 |

### Table 3.4. Open codes proposed by UNIPOSMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORYBAG</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?** | • Lack of theoretical knowledge  
• Lack competences of caretakers, volunteers  
• Lack of sincerity of professionals |
| **How do the course and the projects solve these issues?** | • Focus on communication skills  
• Giving broad knowledge on of individual and group processes and contexts  
• Giving broad knowledge of methodologies in storytelling and Narrative Practice |
| **Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?** | • Serious practical training |
| **Total codes** | 6 |

### Table 3.5. Open codes proposed by STORYBAG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CERES</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What are the issues the courses and the projects analysed try to address, in terms of training process for storytelling with people at risk?** | • Many training initiatives, but no single course of study qualifies one as a storyteller  
• Need of clarification and criteria to define storytelling  
• Need of quality standards  
• Increasing credibility and image of professionals using storytelling |
| **How do the course and the projects solve these issues?** | • Spreading the idea of storytelling as an aid to well-being in health professions  
• Spreading the idea of storytelling as an aid in educational field  
• Empowerment of individuals and communities |
Which are the elements joining all the courses and the projects analysed?

- Focus on verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Focus on professional attitude
- Focus on problem solving
- Focus on solution building

**Total codes** | **11**

*Table 3.6. Open codes proposed by CERES*

The coding process applied to the data collected in the desk research helped us to construct 38 open codes. Such codes have been analysed via the refocused coding procedure together with the open codes constructed in Phase 2 (see. Chapter 4).

3.10. SUMMARY

In this Chapter we have described Phase 1 of our research. Phase 1 consisted in a desk research each Partner conducted regarding the existing storytelling training in their own countries, with particular emphasis on storytelling applied to the work with people at risk. Moreover, a research on EU granted projects on storytelling used in the field of helping relationships and health care has been made.

Data collected have been analysed through an open coding process (Charmaz, 2014). The 38 codes created after this analysis have been added to the open codes created in Phase 2 and helped for the development of the refocused coding process.

References


4. PHASE 2 AND REFOCUSED CODING

In this Chapter we will describe Phase 2 of the research, consisting in several interviews conducted by the Partners. People interviewed were, at some level, experts in storytelling. Moreover, the open coding process on the data collected by the interviews is described, as well as the refocused coding process involving open codes both from Phase 1 and Phase 2.

4.1. Research methodology of Phase 2

The interviews were conducted from November 2016 to January 2017. First of all, we focused on contacting two kinds of experts:

- Professional storytellers, applying their expertise in the work with people at risk
- Helping or health professionals applying storytelling techniques in their work.

In some cases, due to different reasons (e.g., the experts in storytelling were not available, or, in some countries, there were too few storytelling experts to be contacted), some Partners interviewed helping and health professionals who do not use storytelling, asking them what were they thoughts about this topic. Similarly, some Partners interviewed expert storytellers who usually do not work with people at risk, asking them about possible ways of using their expertise in this field.

Talks with the experts were conducted in different ways. Some were face to face interviews, some were online interviews via video conferencing software (e.g. Skype, Hangout, etc.) or via phone calls. If for some reasons the experts could not be available in person, via video conference or via phone, we ran the interviews via email. The interviews were conducted according to a semi-structured methodology (Barnett, 2012), aimed to deepen the information gathered by the desk research in Phase 1. Guidelines for the subjects to be explored were given by the questions created at the beginning of the research, starting from the implications of the research question and described in Appendixes 1 and 2. The choice of using a semi-structure approach was due to several reasons.

First of all, semi-structured interviews are cooperative in nature (Gomm, 2004). They are consistent with participatory and emancipatory models (Newton, 2010) and with social constructivist philosophy inspiring our work (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Semi-structured interviews can be seen as “fact-producing interactions”, meaning that facts are socially produced and the influence of a responsibly engaged researcher helps interviewees describe perceptions they would otherwise think irrelevant or in their normal social context feel inhibited from mentioning (Gomm, 2004).

Secondly, since the experts interviewed come from different contexts and have different cultural and professional backgrounds, semi-structured approach allowed us to formulate questions that could be adherent to their language and their story. Semi-structured interviews are more conversational in nature. They allow individuals to disclose thoughts and feelings which are clearly private. This method relies on the inter-personal skills of the interviewer, the ability to establish relationship and rapport. These qualities are valuable and ethically sensitive (Newton, 2010).
Thirdly, semi-structured interviews are best used when you won't get more than one chance to interview someone and when you will be sending several interviewers out into the field to collect data (Bernard, 1998). This is the situation we experienced during our research: in many cases arranging a (face-to-face or online) meeting was a difficult process, so most of times we had just one chance to interview them. Only exception was email exchange, where we had the opportunity to contact the experts more than once.

Last reason we decided to use semi-structure interviewing, is that they can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (ibid.), so that we have been able to analyse them with the CGT coding procedure.

4.1.1. Characteristics of the interviewees

Considering each Partner involved in Phase2, experts interviewed were distributed as follows:

- OZARA interviewed 11 experts among coaches and professional storytellers. Experts interviewed seem to have in common the idea that storytelling can be a useful tool for working in the educational field. Stories can be considered as a mean of developing a specific educational setting. Another interesting concept emerging is the idea that storytelling can be used to empower people, by motivating the, to overcome prejudice and stereotypes and working on personal potentials. The following professionals who work with stories/personal stories of people were willing to make their names public:
  - A. Biba Reboj\(^{53}\), a coach from Inštitutu Ribalon\(^{54}\) with experience in solution focused approach (O’Connell et al., 2012)
  - Mag. Marjeta Novak, a Communicologist, Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF), working in Humus d.o.o\(^{55}\), where the word Humus is short for 'human uspehi' in Slovenian, meaning something similar to 'the human side of success' with the mission to create conditions for optimal growth within organisations - the growth of people, profit, and planet
  - Karmen Vaupotič with Master's degree in administrative sciences, Natalija Žunko with Bachelor degree in Economics and Urška Pavlič with Bachelor degree in Sociology and History, all working in Fundacija PRIZMA - Foundation for Improvement of Employment Possibilities\(^{56}\)
  - Manuela Božič and Sandra Gojkovič, both professional workers in the field of social work at OZARA, an NGO in the field of social and health care, active in the field of programs and self-help programs for the advocacy for people with mental health problems and their families\(^{57}\)

\(^{53}\) https://ribalon.org/2015/12/23/a-biba-rebolj/
\(^{54}\) https://ribalon.org/
\(^{55}\) http://humus.si/en/
\(^{57}\) http://www.ozara.org/
o Marja Guček, Specialist in youth work, working at MKC Maribor (Youth cultural centre Maribor), a public institution aimed at providing a variety of activities in the field of youth and culture58

o Janja Sivec, an ethnologist and cultural anthropologist active and working in the field of youth work; within the latter at projects that combine youth work and interpretation of heritage at NGO Žive Legende – association for development of interpretation of heritage, tourism and art “Legende”59

• BBRZ interviewed 11 experts:
  o 7 of them works in the social sector as pedagogues or psychologists.
  o 1 professional coach
  o 1 psychotherapist
  o 1 media expert
  o 1 professional storyteller

The idea of involving the media expert was due to the fact that storytelling in Austria is mostly used in print and media field, as a way to improve company and personal brand. Thus, it appeared interesting to interview a professional in corporate and business storytelling and explore his ideas about the use of stories in the work with people at risk.

• EOLAS interviewed 5 experts. All of them agreed for the Consortium to make their names public:
  o Carmen Ibarlucea60 is an oral storyteller with experience with working with groups at risk of exclusion or who are such as inmates and youngster in youth centres
  o Mariola del Pozo61 is an oral storyteller with a focus on the therapeutic application of stories
  o Beatriz Fernández is a speech therapist at the Association for Auditory Disabled Persons in Badajoz. She works with deaf children and those with other hearing problems
  o Ángela Pajuelo Benítez62 is the founding member of the cooperative “DILEE” dedicated to “easy reading” and making information and stories accessible to all
  o Marina Pardo Lanzos is staff member at Red Aragonesa63, a regional platform in Aragon providing support and coordination to entities working in the field of social inclusion.

It is interesting to note that all the Spanish interviewees consider the concept of “exclusion” as in some ways related to the concept of “person at risk”. People at risk

58 http://mkc.si/
59 http://www.dlegende.com/
60 http://www.carmenibarlucea.info/
61 http://mariolanarradora.blogspot.it/
62 http://www.lanzaderasempleo.es/equipo-lanzaderas/angela-pajuelo-benitez
63 http://www.redaragonesa.org
are seen as people who are socially and/or economically excluded from the community around them, or are at risk of being excluded. The exclusion can be related to different issues (e.g., race immigrants gender age, mental or health problems, disabilities, unstructured families, violence, poverty, etc.) Also, children with learning difficulties, unemployed persons or persons with very low (or no) qualifications are to be considered at risk. This idea appears interesting, as we believe it is in some way related to issues which social constructivism aims to address, such as social inclusion and influence of social dynamics on this process.

- UNIPOSMS interviewed 6 experts. 5 of them have been interviewed via Skype, one via email:
  - Valentina Mossa\(^{64}\), a psychologist defining herself a storyteller, applying her own methodology (inspired by authors like James Hillman, Joseph Campbell, Antonino Ferro, Luciano Gallino and Michael White) in her private practice
  - Marco Matera\(^{65}\), a corporate and life coach applying solution focused approach integrated with (mostly) performative storytelling
  - Elisabetta Garbarini\(^{66}\), who integrates storytelling with her background in humanistic and transpersonal counselling
  - Davide Bardi and Paola Balbi (interviewed together), professional storytellers and founders of the association “Raccontamiunastoria”\(^{67}\), which tries to develop and spread throughout Italy the principles and ideas of the Storytelling Revival methodology (Wilson, 2006)
  - Carmine Lazzarini\(^{68}\), pedagogue and researcher, expert in Demetrio’s autobiographic methodology and one of LUA’s trainers. Lazzarini has been working with young people for years and has written several books on the use of autobiography in educational settings (e.g., Lazzarini, 2000, 2007). He has been interviewed via email.

Interestingly, all Italian experts seem to agree with the idea that storytelling is actually part of Italian tradition. Thus, a training in storytelling, trying to be more comprehensive and respectful of the several faces storytelling has in this country, would be more than welcome. But it needs to be stressed that people trying to learn and apply storytelling must be aware of its strength and limits, and must be ready to cooperate with other professionals.

- STORYBAG interviewed 7 experts, via phone calls:
  - Arjen Barel is the director of the Storytelling Centre\(^{69}\), who from the beginning concentrated on storytelling as a performance art and organises the International Storytelling Festival Amsterdam, the biggest storytelling festival in the Netherlands. In the last few years the Centre has also been focusing on community work, especially with young people

\(^{64}\) [http://www.valentinamossapsicologa.com/](http://www.valentinamossapsicologa.com/)
\(^{65}\) [http://www.marcomatera.it/](http://www.marcomatera.it/)
\(^{67}\) [www.raccontamiunastoria.com](http://www.raccontamiunastoria.com)
\(^{68}\) [http://www.lua.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3765&Itemid=139](http://www.lua.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3765&Itemid=139)
\(^{69}\) [http://storytelling-centre.nl/](http://storytelling-centre.nl/)
- Anne van Delft\(^{70}\) is a renown and experienced storyteller and coach, who has been working for many years with elderly people in communities.

- Pauline Seebrgts\(^{71}\) is a professional storyteller and a narrative counsellor and coach. Her primary beneficiaries are people in teams (or whole teams) who work within change processes in organisations or communities. Health care and governmental organisations are her focus. She helps these teams and their individuals to become aware of internal themes and topics.

- Frans de Vette is one of the senior storytellers in the Netherlands. His origins are theatre, acting and directing. He is also a storytelling trainer and a story coach (personal stories). He was one of the founders of the Nationale Vertelschool (National Storytelling School) \(^{72}\) where he still teaches storytelling. In 2016 he received the Life Time Achievement Award of the Dutch Storytelling Foundation.

- Marin Millenaar is a tram conductor, musician and storyteller from Amsterdam. He would not like to give up his work as a tram conductor because he sees storytelling and working with stories as something he loves to do and thinks is necessary. When he drives the tram, often people sit next to him and start telling, and he listens. His main theme is “personal stories”: he prefers to tell stories from his own life. However, he is also at home in legends and epic stories.

- Marijn Visser\(^{73}\) is a storyteller and improvisation theatre maker. His background is social work. He has started storytelling as an amateur at the Mezrab Storytelling Centre and has followed some workshops there. He offers workshops for companies and communities, which are always based on improvisation with (and based on) stories: e.g. for team building, internal communication, reorganisation. He also has a vast and long working experience with people at risk.

- Robert van Hennik is a systemic therapist (family- and relation therapy) who also works as a narrative therapist and lectures Narrative Therapy at RINO Groep (see also ‘Courses in NL’). Next to his work as a therapist, he is also partner in Euthopia (Centre for systemic therapy, education and supervision) \(^{74}\), which offers a 2-year course systemic therapy, including narrative- and dialogic therapy (accredited by NVRG).

Dutch experts stressed several important functions of storytelling. Storytelling appears to be a way of working that empowers people by increasing their resilience and their reflective abilities. According to some of the interviewees, such empowerment comes from the recognition of our own story in other people’s stories. Such recognition facilitates connection among persons, and, consequently, increases the level of empathic listening and the transition from “I” to “we”.

- CERES conducted 12 interviews, via face-to-face meeting or phone calls:

\(^{70}\) [http://www.annevandelft.nl](http://www.annevandelft.nl)
\(^{71}\) [http://www.paulineseebrgts.nl](http://www.paulineseebrgts.nl)
\(^{72}\) [http://www.nationalevertelschool.nl/](http://www.nationalevertelschool.nl/)
\(^{73}\) [http://www.improphondo.nl/](http://www.improphondo.nl/)
\(^{74}\) [http://euthopia.nl/](http://euthopia.nl/)
Russel McLarty is a Church of Scotland Minister working for 21 years in a parish in the notorious East End of Glasgow. He is now an interim minister working in mediation work for the Church of Scotland. He says: “Storytelling is part of everything I do”. He served for three years as Chair of the Scottish Storytelling Forum.

Miranda Quinney has been working with story for the last ten years. She is passionate about the importance of saving people's real life stories and works with individuals and groups as a biographer and facilitator. Her work with patients, staff and carers at Watford's Peace Hospice Care is a daily reminder of how powerful our stories are. Together with Doreen Patterson, she has developed a methodology called “Sharing Stories for Wellbeing”, as a way to share the benefits of biographical story telling.

John Hamilton has been a professional storyteller since way back in the last century. He served on the committee of the Scottish Storytelling Forum and served as chair of the Scottish Interpretation Network. He initially used stories and storytelling to interpret the natural world as an environmental storyteller, then, working with his wife, Noreen, he slid into the interpretation of all aspects of heritage. John and Noreen, working as Heritage Stories, have engaged in a wide range of education projects, always with storytelling at their core. John has worked in the museum sector with Scottish Borders Museum Service and recently as Community Outreach Officer with Causeway Museum Service. He has designed and developed exhibitions, workshops and learning resources.

Sean McCormick is Business Development Adviser at The Open College Network Northern Ireland, a UK recognised Awarding Organisation based in Northern Ireland, but also able to award qualifications in England. The focus of Sean's role is to develop and support key OCN NI centres as well developing and marketing new OCNNI products and services. Sean is currently involved in developing OCN NI’s E-Learning programs. Sean is also a UK EPALE Ambassador.

Marie Thompson is a self-employed EQA works as a sub-contractor with OCN(NI), specialising in Essential Skills of numeracy, communication & ICT. She likes to see varied methods of assessment, especially video & audio to prove competence and skill in a subject matter. She has worked for many years in England with qualifications geared towards those with Intellectual Learning disabilities, including physical disabilities. She has assisted CERES Europe’s assessment team with advice on how to approach assessment with those who would be classed as “people at risk” so that a skill set can be clearly demonstrated for qualification and employment.

Richard Watson is a long-term established facilitator, engaging with the most socially excluded young people in Northern Ireland. His work takes him to

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75 http://www.tracscotland.org/tracs/storytelling/scottish-storytelling-forum
76 http://www.sharingstoriesforwellbeing.co.uk/
77 http://www.tracscotland.org/tracs/storytelling/directory-of-storytellers/storytellers/john-hamilton
78 http://www.heritagestories.co.uk
79 https://www.ocnni.org.uk
areas of multiple deprivation, and helps participants progress to a positive future. He collaborates with the voluntary association “Bytes Project”\(^80\), which uses ICT as leverage and advancement to qualifications

- Therese Charles and Darryl Charles are both senior lecturers at Ulster University, Digital Games Development. Therese Charles is also the owner of Silver Fish Studios\(^81\). Both of them apply storytelling in their projects in digital media, design, content creation and delivery, games and Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality within academia and the creative industries

- Donald Smith is a hugely influential figure in the Scottish Storytelling revival. He was instrumental in setting up the Scottish Storytelling Forum and the creation of the Scottish Storytelling Centre in Partnership with the Church of Scotland. He served as director of the centre from its inception until recently. He oversaw a major rebuild of the historic building in 2006 as the world’s first purpose built modern centre for storytelling. In 2012 came the formation of Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland which supports storytelling, music and dance in collaboration with the centre. He is a director of the Scottish International Storytelling Festival\(^82\)

- Tom Muir\(^83\) is the author of numerous books on Orcadian history and folk lore. He has worked for 18 years with the islands’ museum service. He became a storyteller in order to promote the folk tales he was unearthing. He has shared stories in venues around the world. For over ten years he has been travelling to Slovenia, performing and promoting storytelling

- Ewan McVicar\(^84\) has worked as a social worker for over 20 years. He is a registered storyteller with the Scottish Storytelling Centre. He is also a noted folklorist and songwriter. He as published several books on Scottish song and been responsible for a number of archives of Scots material

- Keith Slatter is a community activist and complimentary health practitioner. He uses storytelling in supporting people with a wide range of mental issues. Story sharing is a regular part of the group's activities

- Gemma Reid \(^85\) is a self-employed heritage consultant with expertise in interpretation, oral history, learning and participation. Her work often involves facilitating storytelling relating to the past or drawing from personal stories to develop interpretative or learning resources.

Among the ideas emerged in these interviews, an interesting one relates to the need of defining how storytelling relates to therapy and counselling. Some of the interviewees, in fact, state that they do not provide therapy, as storytelling is giving people opportunity to share their story within a facilitated and safe environment. Others, instead, recognize the therapeutic value of storytelling, if used in specific contexts. Another interesting concept stressed by many experts is “self-confidence”. The use of stories seems to improve self-confidence and self-esteem both in young or in adult

\(^{80}\) http://www.bytes.org
\(^{81}\) http://www.silverfishstudios.co.uk/
\(^{82}\) http://www.tracscotland.org/festivals/scottish-international-storytelling-festival
\(^{83}\) https://www.orkneystorytellingfestival.co.uk/performers/tom-muir/
\(^{84}\) http://ewanmcvicar-com.webs.com/
\(^{85}\) http://quartocollective.com/
people, by creating a context where persons can share their ideas, thoughts, emotions and life experiences. A third idea arisen is the need of continuing education. Even if, as some experts noted, people are natural storytellers – and, consequently, storytelling is a medium everyone recognizes – they need to train the discipline and the methodologies, with focus both on theory and practice. A fourth idea about storytelling is connected to the ability of respecting people’s stories. It appears important not to reshape their narratives and the meanings conveyed by them, but to honour their efforts in sharing their thoughts and experiences.

4.1.2. Overview narrative analysis related the interviews

As stated in par. 2.3., the research questions may change as the research moves forward. Alternatively, its implications can change, or new implications can be added. We believe the latter is actually what happened in Phase 2. The overview analysis allowed us to co-construct new implications of the research questions that can be defined in 3 conceptual categories:

1. Skills to be developed in order to work with stories with people at risk
2. Theories and models to be learnt in order to apply storytelling efficiently
3. Fundamental elements of a training in storytelling

Considering the first category, it appears that most of the interviewees agreed that professionals using storytelling with people at risk need to develop communicative and listening skills. Such competencies and abilities help professionals to structure effective relationships with clients/patients, where stories can be heard, told and crafted. “Carefulness” seems to be another important concept expressed by experts: the professional applying storytelling needs very careful use of different tools. He/she also needs to be careful of the context and the environment he/she is working in, and of the possible consequences of his/her actions within such context. “Carefulness” seems also to be considered as an important aspect of professionalism. People working with stories in the health and helping sector need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their approach and be able to work in collaboration with other experts.

These ideas take us to the second conceptual category. In general, all the experts agree with the idea that storytelling is a sort of “umbrella” term, defining a wide number of approaches, models and techniques. Even professional storytelling seems to be considered as a various profession, relying on different theoretical stances about the use stories in live-performance contexts. According to our interviewees, professionals need to be aware of at least one theoretical model, which defines the way they analyze social phenomena. Nonetheless, a continuing education is recommended, as it helps professionals to keep their work updated to the recent scientific literature.

Thus, considering the characteristics that an effective and useful training in storytelling for people at risk should have, all the experts seem to agree that it should primarily focus on the quality of its content. Quality seems guaranteed by the following elements:

- a clear definition of the theoretical ideas and principles underlying the training
- an integration between theory and practice
- the involvement of renowned experts in the field of storytelling as trainers

The idea of submitting the course to an accreditation process seems of little significance for most of our interviewees. It is way too important to rely on the quality of the training rather to focus on gaining an acknowledgement of sort by some public and/or private body.

4.2. Open coding in Phase 2

Starting from the new conceptual categories developed in relation to the research question, new working questions emerged. The open codes created in Phase 2 are actually a way of answering to such working questions, on the basis of the narrative data collected by the interviews. At the end of the open coding process, we constructed 77 codes.

The working question in Phase 2 are the following:
- What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk?
- What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk?
- How to define storytelling in the development of a training?
- What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students?

The following tables describes how each Partner answered to these questions providing their open codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk?</th>
<th>• Educate people (especially youngsters) • Empowering people • Motivating people • Give clarification to the term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk?</td>
<td>• Soft skills derived by other experience lived by the students • Basic proficiency in socio-psychological field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to define storytelling in the development of a training?</td>
<td>• A set of methodologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students?</td>
<td>• Various models, coming from psychology, psychotherapy, counselling and philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total codes</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1. Open coded proposed by OZARA*
## BBRZ

| What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk? | • Give clarification to the term  
• Empowerment  
• Transformation  
• Change of perspective  
• Creativity |
| What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk? | • Communication skills  
• Questioning techniques  
• Knowledge about body language  
• Empathy  
• Active listening  
• Mental agility  
• Humour |
| How to define storytelling in the development of a training? | • Tool that could be used in face-to-face and group settings |
| What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students? | • A profound training in a social/pedagogical/psychological field should be basis requirement for the training |

**Total codes** 14

*Table 4.2. Open codes proposed by BBRZ*

## EOLAS

| What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk? | • Spreading the culture of storytelling and Narrative Practice  
• Clear definition of the benefits |
| What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk? | • Know how to listen  
• High level of empathy  
• Emotional balance which allows you to establish some level of distance between the storyteller and its audience or targeted group and not too much affected by reactions or failure.  
• Patience  
• Capacity to communicate and transmit  
• Sensitivity  
• Creativity  
• Adaptability to different audiences |
| How to define storytelling in the development of a training? | • A set of techniques |
| What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students? | • Good knowledge of all the different narrative techniques and how and when to apply |

**Total codes** 12

*Table 4.3. Open codes proposed by EOLAS*
### UNIPOSMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk?</th>
<th>Give a clear definition of storytelling • Empowerment • Therapy • Self-confidence • Social connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk?</td>
<td>Active listening skills • Questioning • Empathy • Respect for other people’s story • Awareness of his/her own limits • Awareness of strengths and weaknesses of storytelling • Non-verbal communication • Para-verbal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to define storytelling in the development of a training?</td>
<td>One of the several existing methodologies of storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students?</td>
<td>Psychological models of storytelling • Narrative functioning of the mind • Need for choice of one model and training on that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total codes** 17

*Table 4.4. Open codes proposed by UNIPOSMS*

### STORYBAG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk?</th>
<th>Empowerment • Facilitation • Cohesion (from “I” to “we”) • Role modelling • Humanising people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk?</td>
<td>Broad knowledge of group processes and context • Focus on questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to define storytelling in the development of a training?</td>
<td>A discipline applied to several contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students?</td>
<td>Story collecting • Story circles • Storytelling (incl. 3rd person stories) • Narrative Practices (therapy and coaching) • broad knowledge of individual and group processes and contexts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total codes** 13

*Table 4.5. Open codes proposed by STORYBAG*
### CERES

| What are the aims of storytelling with people at risk? | • Improving self-confidence and self-awareness  
• Improving well-being  
• Promoting change  
• Support a therapeutic and/or social activity/process in a health and therapy setting  
• Improving awareness  
• Improving memory |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| What are the skills that should be developed in a training in storytelling for professionals working with people at risk? | • Understanding and empathy  
• Awareness  
• Listening and auditory skills  
• Vocalisation  
• Performance  
• Self-evaluation (what went well?) |
| How to define storytelling in the development of a training? | An activity that applies a variety of techniques |
| What theoretical models and techniques need to be learned by students? | • Students need to be aware of the variety of techniques and models defining storytelling  
• Students need to be aware of the variety of contexts storytelling is used |

| Total codes | 15 |

*Table 4.6. Open codes proposed by CERES*

### 4.3. Focused coding

The focused process coding was meant to refine the 38 open codes from Phase 1 and the 77 open codes from Phase 2, in order to create broader categories aimed to summarize our data, so that we could limit conceptual redundancy, and create guidelines for constructing the learning units of our training. We believe that the broader categories emerging from the focused coding process are the following:

1. Consistent Theoretical Framework
2. Time for Exercise and Practice
3. Specific vs Soft skills
4. Contextualized Thinking

The process of creating these broader categories has evolved through continuous comparison among data. The comparison has been made according to Charmaz’s suggestions of trying to answer to the following questions (Charmaz, 2006):

- *Do these concepts help you understand what the data indicate?*
- *If so, how do they help?*
- *Can you explicate what is happening in this line or segment of data with these concepts?*
Can you adequately interpret this segment of data without these concepts? What do they add?

The answers to such questions have been written as memos throughout the Project, have been compared to the previous 38+77 codes and helped us to create the 4 broader theoretical categories.

4.4. SUMMARY

This Chapter describes Phase 2 of our research. At first, the Partners involved in the Consortium (except for IMAGINE) have conducted 52 interviews both with experts in storytelling applied to the work with people at risk, and with experts in psychosocial, educational and/or health field, asking them how they would use storytelling in their work. Then, an overview narrative analysis has been made, that allowed us to develop 77 open codes. Finally, the process of focused coding was described, involving the 77 open codes from Phase 2 and the 38 open codes from Phase 1.

References


Newton N. (2010), “The use of semi-structured interviews in qualitative research: Strenghts and weaknesses”. The University of Bristol. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/1561689/The_use_of_semi-structured_interviews_in_qualitative_research_strengths_and_weaknesses


5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chapter describes the implications of the focused codes and how they relate to the research questions. Also, conceptual connections between the results and the learning units of the course in storytelling the Project aims to develop are discussed. Finally, important recommendations on the way results can be seen and used for further research are given.

5.1. Discussion of the results

We believe that the 4 categories of Consistent Theoretical Framework, Time for Exercise and Practice, Specific vs Soft Skills and Contextualized Thinking are useful ways to express answers to the research question: What are the characteristics of an effective and useful training in storytelling for people at risk?

The concept of “Consistent Theoretical Framework” saturates the data related to the idea that there is a variety of models and theories about storytelling and its application, so that storytelling is an “umbrella term” defining a set of methodologies, a profession, and/or a way of thinking. Thus, according to these data it seems that a course in storytelling should clarify and define the epistemology and the vision of the world it relies upon, and consequently the theoretical model which is inspired by. This discourse is particularly significant in case the training is developed as an integration of multiple approaches, as it is important that the approaches to be integrated share the same philosophical ideas, so that the emerging model can show a strong inner coherence.

The code called “Time for Exercise and Practice” saturates the data regarding the need for continuing education and in-depth exploration of the process leading the storytelling work. Taking time to exercise and practice storytelling helps the professional to increase his/her expertise on the subject. Moreover, this concept also refers to the structure of the training, which should be organizing in a way that allows student to practice, study and elaborate the concepts and the techniques.

The code “Specific vs Soft Skills” saturates the data regarding the idea that, at the end of the training, students should develop a number of fundamental skills to work with stories. Some of these skills have been described as “soft”, that is to say transversal competencies and abilities related to personal and social dimensions (Bhatnagar & Bhatnagar, 2012). Specific skills, on the other hand, relate to the abilities and competencies strictly connected to the storytelling and narrative techniques taught in the course. That is to say, they define “how”, “when” and “where” to use those techniques.

Finally, “Contextualized Thinking” saturates two types of data. First, it refers to the idea that, at the end of the course, students should be aware of using viable storytelling methodology fitting the characteristics of the target group. Moreover, this code refers to the idea that students should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the storytelling approach learnt during the course, so that they acknowledge the limits of it within the specific context they are working (or decide to work). Finally, “Contextualized Thinking” also saturates the data referring to the idea that students, as well as trainers, should be aware that they are not learning and/or teaching the “true” storytelling methodology for working people...
at risk, but actually one of the several ways of conceiving, interpreting and applying storytelling within the broad field of helping and health professions.

We believe that the four above-described focused codes can be considered as guidelines for the developing the learning units of our course. In terms of CGT, the four focused codes could be seen as the basis for the theoretical coding process, which aims to move the analysis “[...] to a theoretical direction” (Charmaz, 2014). In other words, theoretical codes conceptualize how the focused codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory. They help the analyst maintain the conceptual level in writing about concepts and their interrelations (ibid.). We believe that this procedure can be conducted once we develop a first draft of the course, define the theoretical approach and get feedbacks from the first group of students attending the training. Until then, we think it better to propose only the four focused codes. Otherwise, the risk is that trying to fit the focused codes within broader theoretical codes becomes an imperative procedure, and not an emergent one. A theoretical code must go beyond spurious association. No matter how intellectually seductive, fashionable, or discipline-dictated a theoretical code may be, to cross the line from theoretical exploration to forced integration with a preconceived theoretical model undermines the generative nature of Grounded Theory (and CGT in particular) (Holton, 2007).

5.2. Final recommendations

With regard to the results we described in this part, we need to stress two important recommendations.

First, by saying that we will use the four focused codes as guidelines, we mean that we want to reserve ourselves the right to go on with the conversation about the development of a training in storytelling with people at risk. The results showed in this Compendium relate to the first stage of the Project. The Partners will go on working and talking about the most effective and useful way to structure and organize the training, so it will be natural to change our ideas and/or improve some concepts along the way. Moreover, this discourse is coherent with postmodern ideas of “fluidity” and “contingency” (Sharpe, 2005), Postmodernism being one of the philosophical points of view leading our work in this Project (see par. 2.2.)

Second, please consider that CGT, as all other qualitative research approaches, suffers from limited generalizability (Frühmann et al., 2016). The issue of generalization is less frequently discussed in qualitative research and is considered complicated and controversial because the main goal of qualitative research is to provide a rich and contextualized understanding of the human experience (El Hussein et al., 2014). Consequently, our research is contextualized and its results are deeply related to the narratives and the stories we collected within the communities in this project.

However, this does not mean that our results are not useful for the continuation of this Project, or for further researchers who wish to conduct a qualitative research on storytelling in EU. In accordance with what Glaser (2006) states, we can suggest to apply “conceptual generalizing”, meaning focusing on the applicability of the results, not on the descriptive communalities. In that sense, generalizing is never a factual transfer, but it is “just” multiple integrated conceptual hypotheses, modified to fit where applicable by using constant comparison to conceptualize the modified fit, workability and relevance (ibid.).
5.3. SUMMARY

We discussed the characteristics of the four focused codes created after the 38+77 open codes developed in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research. We also explained how the four focused codes saturates the data collected from the desk research and from the interviews. Finally, we provide some recommendations regarding the use of these codes for the future of the Project, and the generalizability of the results developed to a qualitative analysis like CGT.

References


APPENDIX 1

Questions Template 1

State of art of Storytelling in the countries involved in the Project

1. Is Storytelling (or Storyteller) an acknowledged profession in your country?

2. How Storytelling is considered in your country?

3. If Storytelling is an acknowledged profession in your country:
   - Is there a board regulating it?
   - What is the Ministry controlling Storytelling as acknowledged profession (Ministry of health, Ministry of education, etc.)?
   - How is the title of “Storyteller” achieved? Which criteria must be satisfied in order to achieve that title?
   - Is there a professional course that must be attended in order to get the acknowledged title of Storyteller?
   - What organization(s) can provide this course? Are they state organizations (schools, universities, etc.), private organizations, or both? If it is a private organization, how can the course be recognized by the board(s) controlling the Storytelling profession?

4. How is the course organized, in terms of:
   - **Duration** (hours – days – months – years)
   - **Frequency** (e.g.: Full immersion course? 1 week-end per month course? Etc.)
   - **Subjects**: Are all of subjects imposed by the accreditation organism? Which are the imposed subjects? Are there any subjects that can be chosen by the organization(s) providing the course?
   - **Balance between theory and practice** (e.g., 30% theory – 70% practice? 50% theory – 50% practice? Etc.)
   - **Cost**: Is there a cost range the organization(s) must follow? Is there some scholarship?

5. Is Storytelling a recognized specialization in your country? If YES:
   1. What profession(s) Storytelling is a specialization of?
   2. What are the benefits offered by this specialization?
   3. How must this specialization be obtained?
4. Is there a professional course that must be attended in order to get specialization?

5. What organization(s) can provide this course? Are they state organizations (schools, universities, etc.), private organizations, or both? If it is a private organization, how can the course be recognized by the board(s) controlling the professions entitled to get the specialization?

6. How is the course organized, in terms of:
   - Duration (hours – days – months – years)
   - Frequency (e.g.: Full immersion course? 1 week-end per month course? Etc.)
   - Subjects: Are all of subjects imposed by the accreditation organism? Which are the imposed subjects? Are there any subjects that can be chosen by the organization(s) providing the course?
   - Balance between theory and practice (e.g., 30% theory – 70% practice? 50% theory – 50% practice? Etc.)
   - Cost: Is there a cost range the organization(s) must follow? Is there some scholarship?

6. If Storytelling is neither an acknowledged profession nor a specialization in your country, are there any chances to set up a round table in order to start a discussion about the possibility of making Storytelling an acknowledged profession or a specialization?

7. If there are such chances:
   - Who could be the spokespersons involved in the round table?
   - Would it be possible to involve these spokespersons?
   - What would be the first step to be taken in order to involve these spokespersons?

7. Are there any other European or international countries that have started the process of acknowledgement of Storytelling as profession or as specialization? Would it be helpful to use them as an example in order to set up the round table in your country?

8. What would be the benefit(s) of having Storytelling as an acknowledged profession in your country?
APPENDIX 2
Questions Template 2

Projects about Storytelling in European Countries

1. Do you know of any projects in EU or international countries about Storytelling?

2. What are the main results of these projects?

3. What are the benefits of using storytelling, according to these projects?

4. Who run these projects?

5. How could the results provided by these projects be helpful, in order to try and set a round table to establish Storytelling as an acknowledged profession or a specialization in your country?

6. How could the results provided by the StoryTeller Project be helpful, in order to try and set a round table to establish Storytelling as an acknowledged profession or a specialization in your country?
STORYTELLER

Empowerment of persons under risk of exclusion through development of storytelling professional training in under-equipped EU countries

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PARTNERS