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Best practice

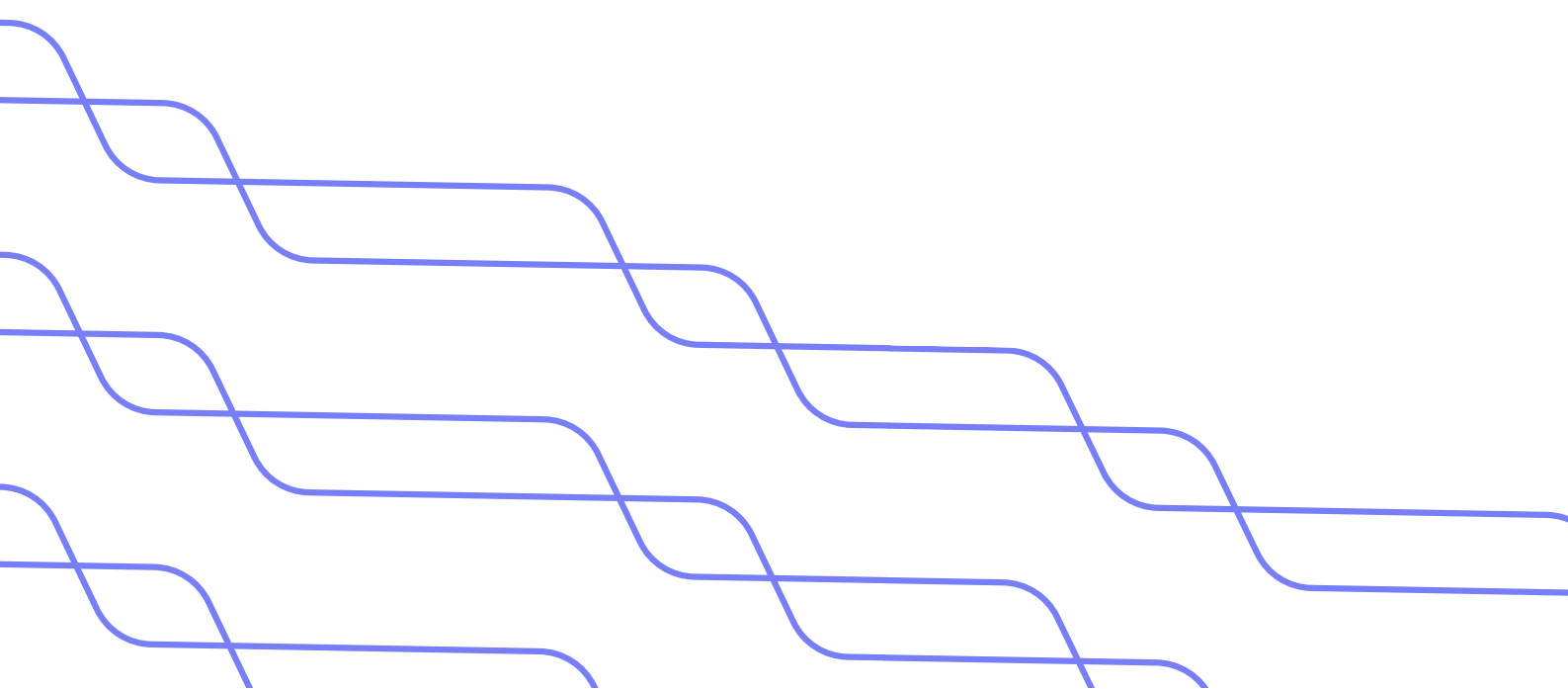
ERASMUS+KA2 - SMALL SCALE PARTNERSHIP "LAILA"

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Phase 1: Comparing good practices and approaches
to the effective process of innovative educational
leadership

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L'Emozionario dei Professionisti Sanitari: a narrative approach to self-care in highly stressful professions

Objectives

The *Emozionario dei Professionisti Sanitari* project stems from the observation of the growing **burnout rate** among medical professionals, notably nurses, a phenomenon which has spiked dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project has started organically in February 2021 via the "*Laboratorio di Nursing Narrativo Milano*" Facebook group, thanks to the efforts of nurses Paola Gobbi, Rosanna Alagna and Titti de Simone. The project's objective is to create a community of professionals offering emotional and psychological support with each other through narrative means, that is the sharing of stories and perspectives on personal experiences in the field.

While maintaining its spontaneous approach, the group has become a space to foster **emotional well-being and professional resilience** in the face of an unprecedented time of crisis, through actions aimed at developing **Emotional Intelligence language and skills**, to provide tools to deal with practical situations Italian nurses may find themselves in. The overall goal is to provide the framework and skills for a better management of the emotions medical professionals experience every day, by increasing awareness to develop Emotional Intelligence and interpersonal skills through training, sharing moments and working groups.

Stakeholders and Partners

The grass-roots social project has stemmed from the existing "*Laboratorio di Nursing Narrativo Milano*", a group of nurses and communication experts whose goal is to analyze nursing care under the lens of **bioethics and deontology**. Through the tools of storytelling, the nurse will thus be able to reclaim a profound dimension of his or her own nursing actions. The working group, which is composed by about twenty people, mainly nurses, is the formalization of various study, training, and research experiences involving dozens of nurses (and other health professionals) over the past two decades.

What was the process?

In their training and professional development courses, the starting point are always the stories of the people being cared for: the behaviors of the different actors involved (user, family members, nurses, caregivers, administrators, volunteers) are analyzed in light of the ethical-deontological principles of the nursing profession. Through the years the group has experimented with and adapted methods and tools from **Narrative Medicine** and the **Medical Humanities** to the projects purposes; they have then designed and implemented in different contexts (health care companies, nursing homes, professional orders) an innovative field training course, already offered to more than two hundred colleagues.

Validation

The growing participation and sharing of narratives among colleagues via the original Facebook group (3.000 registered users) has brought the unprecedented levels of emotional distress and burnout rates experienced during the pandemic to the forefront of the conversation at the managerial and organizational level of Italian national health service. Understanding the growing need for a more structured approach, the theoretical framework of Emotional Intelligence used in the *Emozionario* project has been applied to a professional course with validation by ECM certification (Continuous Medical Education Credits), organized by the Region of Lombardy's divisions of the **National Association of Nursing Professions** and the **National Consortium for Medical Research**.

Impact

The last edition of the course has reached more than 100 participants, the majority of whom did not know about the project and, when surveyed, felt more engaged with the topic. To this date, the project has also reached thousands of professionals in many Italian cities through the organisation of live dissemination events and other initiatives, i.e. the **"Nursing Awareness Week"** with the occasion of International Nurses' Day, and the **"Well-Being Backpack"**: a handbook of practical tools for managing "emotional emergencies."

Success Factors

The grass-root, participative nature of the social project set no entry barriers to professionals, while allowing them to take part in any measure they felt appropriate. This has translated in a easier and more open discussion of sensible issues, and a more attentive response to the dissemination of Emotional Intelligence notions and skills.

Constraints

The project has refined its narrative, horizontal approach, attractive new personnel to its core working group. and stimulating the design of new initiatives. While its volunteering nature may pose some constraints to reach of the project, its innovative response to a clear and wide-spread need is ensuring that the core themes and aims of the project are being multiplied and disseminated by high-profile stakeholders in the medical-sanitary field of Italy.

Lessons learned

The high levels of engagement registered by the original working group of the *Emozionario* project, as well as the increasing number of follow-up initiatives on the topic highlight the scale of the need addressed by its members, and qualify its approach as an efficient Good Practice in Emotional Intelligence mainstreaming.

Sustainability

By virtue of its social, spontaneous approach, the project has virtually no costs of implementation, making it extremely sustainable and easily applicable to a number of high-stress working environments.

Replicability and up-scaling

The core working group of the *Emozionario* is currently taking the experience from native Lombardy to other Italian regions: in Liguria, for example, a newly set-up working group is already active, and contacts have been made in Piedmont. The current goal is to establish collaborations with high-level organisation and interest groups in the field on the national level, sharing Good Practices, knowledge and values. In this sense contacts have recently been made with the central division of the **National Association of Nursing Professions**, with a number Scientific Societies working in the health field and with the **Italian Institute of Bioethics**. This project, initiated by nurses, is an invitation to all health care professionals to reflect on the importance of relationship as a tool of care and self-care. Starting from the knowledge that good management of emotions can contribute to being better professionals and human beings, we evaluate this project's approach as a remarkable Good Practice to promote a healthier organizational culture, more responsive to the needs of individuals and communities.

