

# Supporting Wellbeing and Integration of Transgender Victims in Care Environments with Holistic Approach

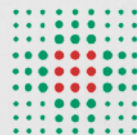
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## REPORT ON SELF-HELP GROUPS ACTIVATED

PROJECT NUMBER 881635 - SWITCH - REC-AG-2019 / REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2019



This project was financed from the European Commission's programme: Law, Equality and Citizenship (2014-2020).



Azienda Unità Sanitaria Locale  
Reggio Emilia





**Report on self-help groups aimed at  
enhancing the wellbeing of transgender  
and intersex clients activated in 3 partner  
countries – Italy, Spain and Czech Republic.**



This project was financed from the European Commission's programme: Law, Equality and Citizenship (2014-2020).

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## Introduction

The SWITCH project workshops in Spain, Italy and the Czech Republic took different forms but were founded in common concepts. They demonstrate the flexibility and functionality of the SWITCH concepts, which allow for adaptation to diverse activities and contexts. In terms of the psychotherapeutic approaches used, we worked with “bottom-up” body-mind based psychotherapeutic approaches. Many transgender clients can benefit from this more holistic approach rather than only verbal therapy because they are dealing with specific issues around their bodily sensations, body image, hormonal changes, daily physical experience in the world, and often feel a disconnection between who they believe they are and what the mirror or society reflects back at them. Facilitators worked in a trans-positive, trauma-informed, peer-learning/non-hierarchical approach to offer embodied and expressive activities, psychoeducation and discussion for integrating five levels of processes: cognition-imagination-emotion-sensation-movement.

### Foundational approaches

**Somatic, trauma-informed modalities** are holistic therapies involving the body in accessing deeper wisdom that cannot be accessed with talk therapy. Trauma therapies focus on working with the client in a way that carefully and safely processes the trauma experience. Many transgender clients have experienced trauma through their journeys to finding their identities, and as their bodies are central to that journey, somatic and trauma-focused therapy may help them learn to cope with the complexity of their situation.

Body-mind therapies are based on the developmental concept of the individual. Methods focus on concepts of sensorimotor learning and reconfiguration of past historical experience, the creation of new experiences, and neuroplasticity allowing for the establishment of new neurological pathways and new mental maps..

**Polyvagal Theory** introduced a new perspective on the relationship between the autonomic nervous (ANS) system and behaviour. The Polyvagal Theory identifies three neural circuits which regulate behavioural and physiological adaptation to safe, dangerous and life-threatening circumstances (Cherland, 2012). It provides insight into the physiology of emotions.



**Positive psychology** focuses on the strengths, potential and innate drive and desire to fulfil our potential. This is a very affirming approach especially for transgender people who have been pathologised.

**Expressive Arts Therapies (EAT)** use creative outlets as a means of connecting with the self, exploring one's concerns through the art form, and finding diversity and new coping skills through self-expression. EAT can be especially helpful for clients who have difficulty verbalizing or conversing about their experiences, thoughts and emotions. EAT can aid transgender clients in unlocking and processing deeper issues and building resilience.



# 1. ITALY

## Perseo

**IL PROGETTO**

L'obiettivo principale del progetto SWITCH è promuovere una formazione adeguata migliorando le competenze di psichiatri, psicologi, psicoterapeuti in modo da assistere adeguatamente persone transgender, non binarie e intersessuali (TI).

**IL LABORATORIO**

- Co-creazione partecipata nella ricerca del benessere
- Sostenere il benessere
- Aumentare la consapevolezza e la conoscenza del benessere

**LE TECNICHE**

- Creare uno spazio sicuro dove ognuno può sentirsi protetto
- Teoria polivagale
- Tecniche mente-corpo

SUPPORTING WELLBEING AND INTEGRATION OF TRANSGENDER VICTIMS IN CARE ENVIRONMENTS WITH HOLISTIC APPROACH

THIS PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND CITIZENSHIP PROGRAMME (2014-2020)

### SWITCH LAB: The Conquest of Well-being

Zuzana Simonova, Maria Giugliano, Margherita Baione

Our laboratory aimed well-being, the understanding of its functioning, how it is generated and how it can be sustained. The principal adopted methodologies were psychoeducation and participatory search for well-being.

The laboratory was designed as a safe space where everyone could feel protected and free to express themselves.

Well-being was explained in the frame of the Polyvagal Theory and supported by body-oriented techniques.

### Objectives

- Build awareness of self-care habits, strategies and growth areas
- Provide psychoeducation on the Polyvagal Theory and physiology of emotions
- Practice strategies to soothe stress, build emotional awareness and resilience
- Build positive self-regard, dignity, appreciation, drawing on positive psychology and concept of post-traumatic growth

### Methodology

The tools, methodologies and materials were adapted to the meetings



that took place online on the Google Meet platform. A virtual bulletin board (Padlet) was used to enable each participant presenting \*self with an image.

The small number of participants (only 5) was constant in all five meetings.

### **Participants**

The five participants were aged between 30 and 60, all members of the Brianza Oltre.

N.B. THE PUBLICATION OF PHOTOS HAS RECEIVED THE CONSENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS

### **Background concepts**

The workshop facilitators drew upon the concepts of the Polyvagal Theory, positive psychology, psycho-body-oriented techniques to offer a holistic approach and support self-understanding (Theory of Mind). Facilitators work with a trans-positive, trauma-informed, peer-learning/non-hierarchical approach to offer embodied and expressive activities, psychoeducation and discussion for integrating five levels of processes: cognition-imagination-emotion-sensation-movement.

### **Content**

Workshops had a basic structure and some common elements which was adapted to suit the particular theme and also adapted to the participants' needs arising during the workshop. Each workshop was opened thus:

- introduction to the theme, facilitators and communication rules
- welcome circle to share names, pronouns and hopes/expectations for the workshop
- psychoeducation to illustrate gradually the concepts of Polyvagal Theory
- exercises to evoke different neurological activation according to the Polyvagal Theory (sympathetic mobilization, collapse, social engagement) to create a personal profile and become aware about how the perception is affected
- somatic practice to help people become aware about their body sensation and to favour verbal description, thus body-mind integration (grounding/orienting/somatic art activity)

The following elements were then combined in an appropriate order



for each workshop:

- reflection, discussion, peer sharing
- somatic practices

Each workshop was closed with reflection and closing feedback. This was done verbally in the middle sessions, while we adopted Padlet during the first and the final session to collect written feedbacks.

### **Safety and participant wellbeing**

The workshops were led by two facilitators (a therapist experienced in psycho-body-oriented approach, a psychologist experienced in group work). We were explicit about the difference between support and therapy, and the rights and responsibilities participants have in a support workshop setting vs. therapeutic context.

### **Session 1 06-02-2022**

#### **Goals**

- To inform the participants about the general objectives and aims of the workshop
- To generate group cohesion
- To collect thoughts about well-being: "What does well-being mean to you? (Image 1)
- To present each member through an image selected on the virtual bulletin board (PADLET) (Image 2)
- To use the "safe place" mind-body technique, that useful to highlight the importance of a safe place; the ability to consciously generate the feeling of security prepares us neurologically towards well-being.



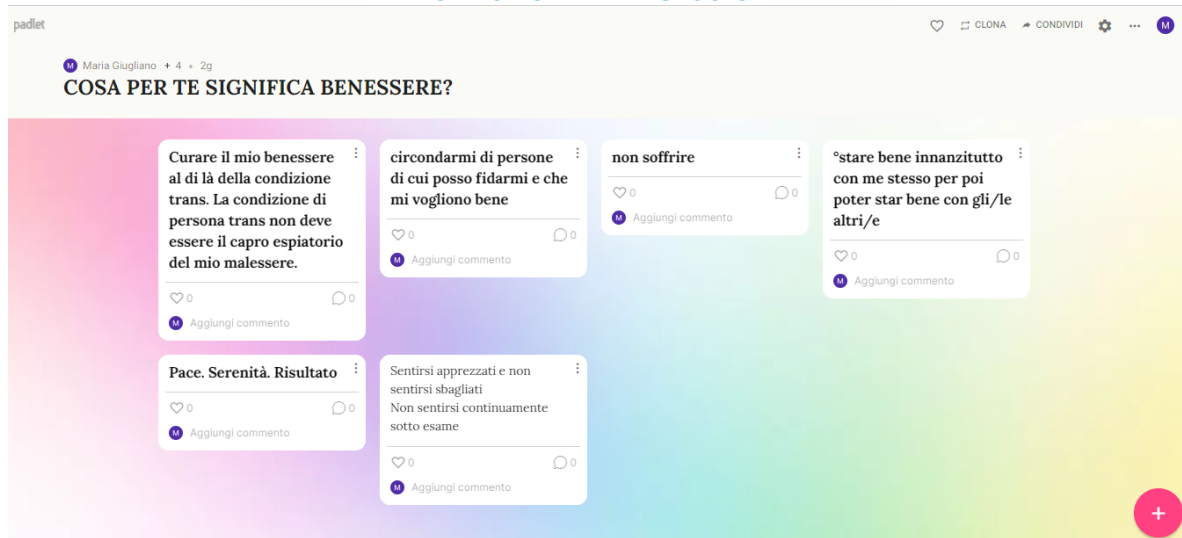


Image 1

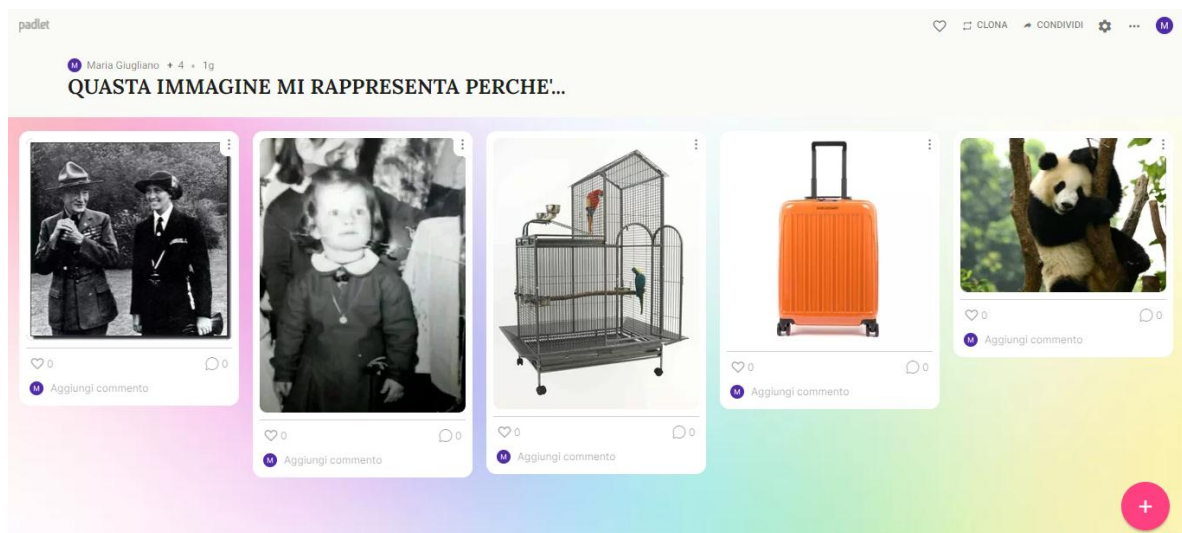


Image 2

## Session 2 13-02-2022

### Goals

- To generate space for creation and dialogue between the participants
- To introduce the concept of embodied mind through:
  - the presentation of the Polyvagal Theory
  - the creation of the personal profile of functioning in different states of activation (1) sympathetic mobilization in response to external or internal danger; (2) activation of a collapse response in situations of threat and / or exhaustion of



## REPORT ON SELF-HELP GROUPS

resources; (3) creation of safety situations that support well-being, human interaction and activities such as play, exploration, courtship, creativity; construction of one's profile of people who respond how they feel in each state, how they perceive others and the surrounding world. Adaptation of the exercises proposed by Deb Dana in her book the Polyvagal Theory in Therapy (2020).

- o discussion of the compiled sheet, comparison and further clarifications
- To know the function of the Autonomous Nerves System (ANS): insights into the principles of the Polyvagal Theory, in particular the principle of the hierarchy was explained to understand the evolutionary meaning of the ANS defensive reactions, its functions in our life and its relationship with the more recent conscious and reflective thinking. The aim is to grasp the multi-level operations and functioning.
- To activate guided breathing in order to balance the relationship between the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems and increase the heart rate variability (HRV) corresponding to the sense of well-being. Breathing was supported by a video animation on YOUTUBE entitled "Mind Drip HRV".

The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide titled "TEORIA POLIVAGALE (S. PORGES, 2003)" is displayed. The slide content includes:

- Enfatizza il ruolo del SNA nel generare comportamenti automatici in risposta al pericolo
- Risultato del processo evolutivo per assicurare la sopravvivenza e prosperità
- 3 stadi distinti

The slide also features a diagram of the human nervous system with labels for "Ventral Vagal" (blue), "Sympathetic" (yellow), and "Dorsal Vagal" (red). The Zoom grid on the right shows several participants: Lazzana Simonova, Brianza Oltre l'Ar..., Annalisa Cassotta, Massimo d'Aguiño, Dani Morello, Stefano Rosa, and a participant with glasses.

### Session 3 20-02-2022

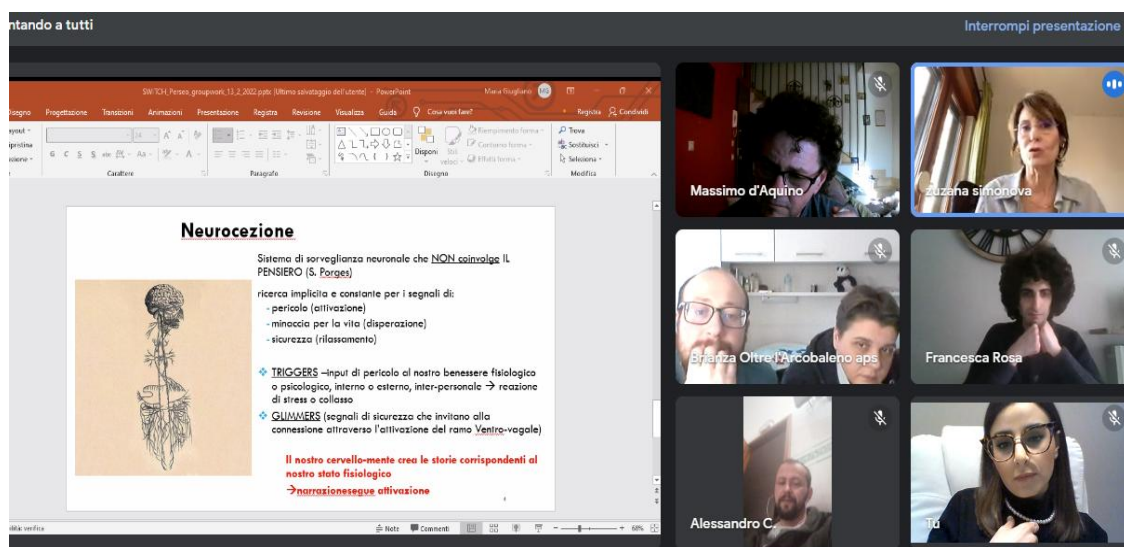
#### Goals

- To collect the feedback on the progress of the second day and the identification of the present state
- To run psycho-education: the Polyvagal Theory's principle of "neuroception" (part 2) has been explained as a constant and



unconscious monitoring of the external and internal environment by the ANS to detect inputs on the safety-danger scale. A distinction is made between the danger inputs that trigger a sympathetic activation of fight/flight, or immobilizing collapse in the case of resources exhaustion; the positive inputs (glimmers) contribute to turning off the defensive activations and re-establishing homeostasis between the different sub-systems.

- To exercise and empower personal resources by using the personal profile sheet created in the 2nd session: "How can I go back from the defensive state of fight/flight or collapse reaction to the state of well-being? What resources do I have at my disposal? What works for me?"
- To experiment Autogenic training. Participants are involved in the experimentation of guided autogenic training (about 15 minutes)
- To share conclusion and feedback: the participants offer their feedback to the autogenic training. The last round is dedicated to a brief comment on the progress of the entire match.
- This session was particularly significant as one of the participants introduced himself with a female name (in the previous sessions participated with a male name).



The screenshot shows a Zoom meeting interface. On the left, a presentation slide titled "Neurocezione" is displayed. The slide content includes:

- Neurocezione**
- Sistema di sorveglianza neuronale che **NON** coinvolge IL PENSIERO (S. Forgas)
- ricerca implicita e costante per i segnali di:
  - pericolo (attivazione)
  - minaccia per la vita (disperazione)
  - sicurezza (rilassamento)
- TRIGGERS** -input di pericolo al nostro benessere fisiologico o psicologico, interno o esterno, inter-personale → reazione di stress o collasso
- GLIMMERS** (segnali di sicurezza che invitano alla connessione attraverso l'attivazione del ramo Vento-vagale)
- Il nostro cervello-mente crea le storie corrispondenti al nostro stato fisiologico**
- narrazione segue attivazione**

On the right, a grid of video feeds shows several participants. Visible names include Massimo d'Aquino, Zuzana Simonova, Branza Oltre l'Arcobaleno aps, Francesca Rosa, and Alessandro C.

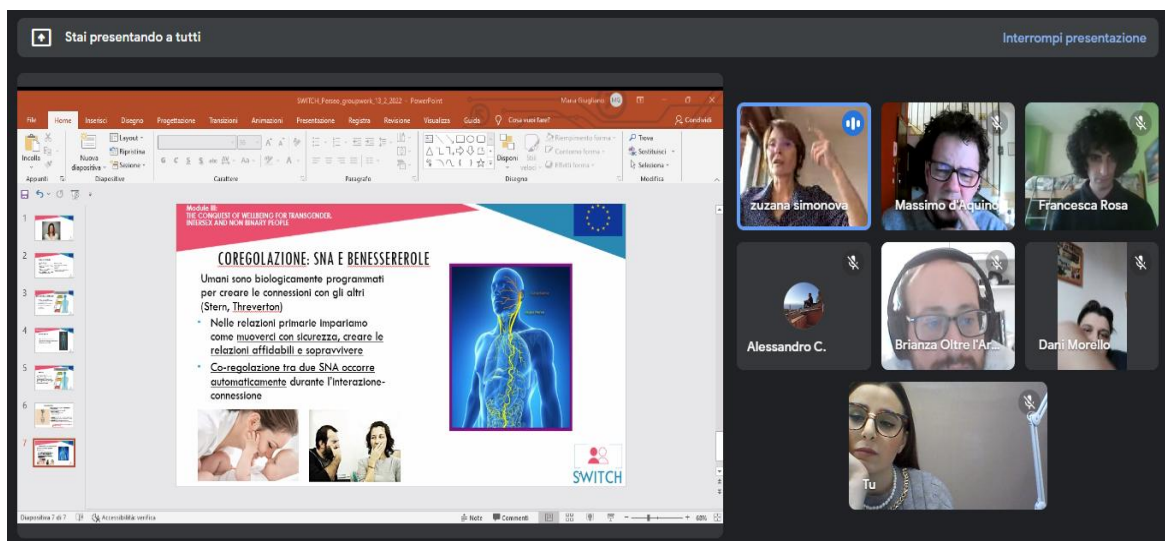
## Session 04 27-02-2022

### Goals

- Sharing feedback on the previous meeting and on the progress of the week in the frame of the Polyvagal Theory's concepts

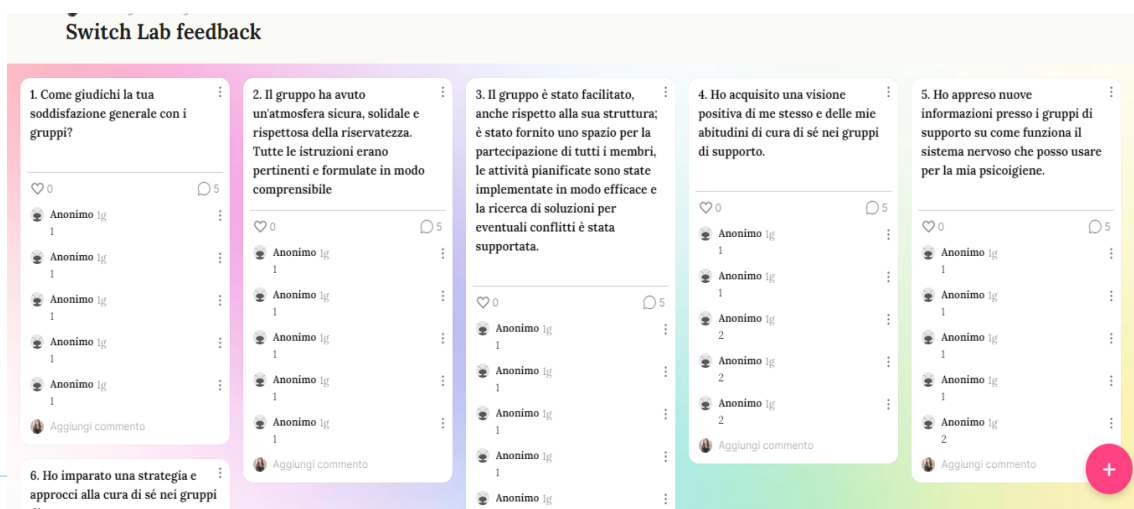


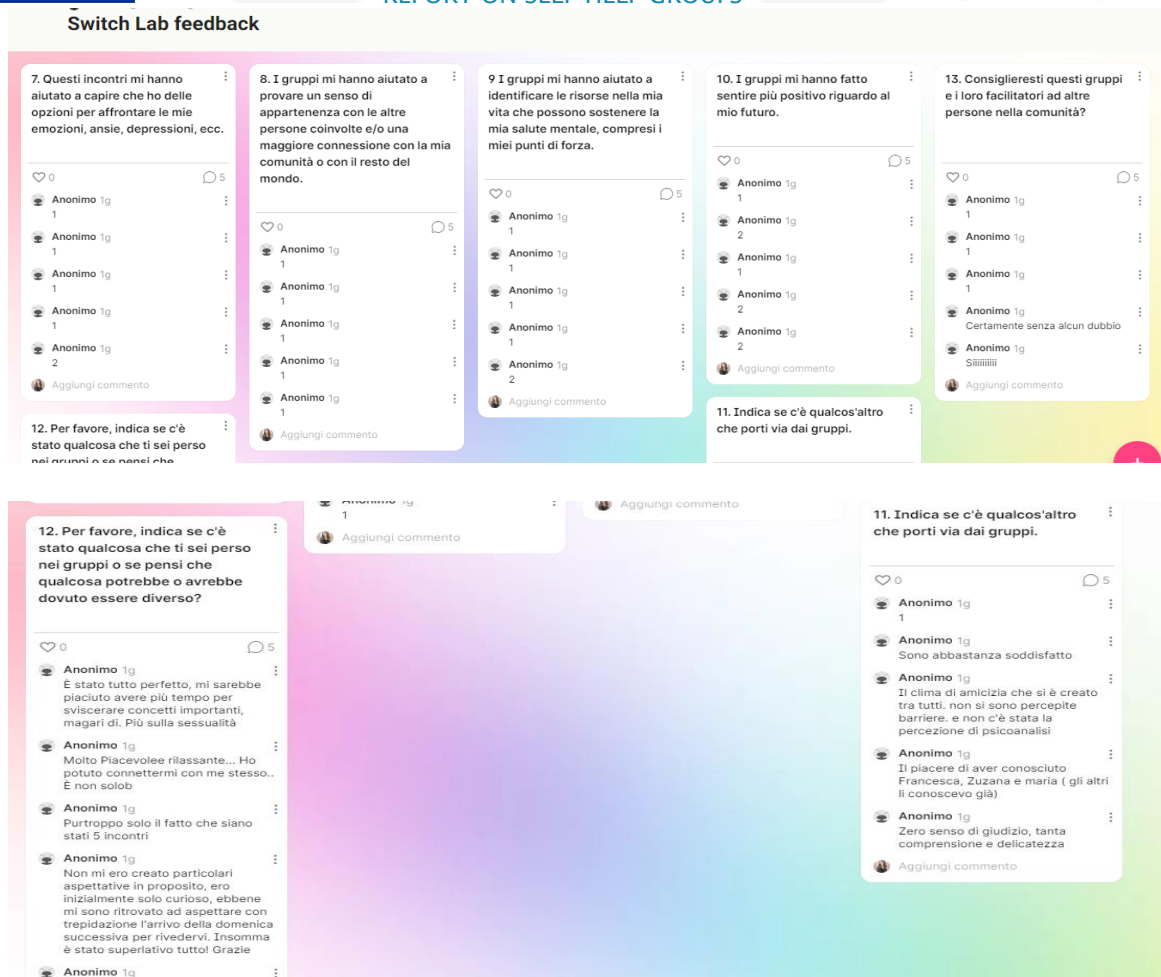
- To carry on psychoeducation dedicated to the exposition of the third principle of the Polyvagal Theory- co-regulation – that illustrates the calming value of contact with significant others through the primary senses (hearing, sight, touch, voice)
- To experience the effect of different senses and learn to calm neurological activation (grounding, touch, breath, butterfly hug)
- To practice mindfulness aiming awareness of mental and sensorimotor processes in the here and now
- Sharing feedback and experience of the meeting



## Session 5 06-03-2022

Final session of the workshop to collect the participants' feedback through the Padlet device.





## Qualitative evaluation

A qualitative evaluation session of the process was held. The tool designed by TRANSPARENT <https://forms.gle/LinzQjAodRA57qht8> was applied ONLINE to evaluate the results with more quantitative indicators.

All the participants were submitted a feedback questionnaire during the last group session.

The form was administered online via Padlet in order to guarantee both the active participation of the subjects and their anonymity. (the screen shots of the Italian version of the questionnaire as it was administered to the group can be found among the annexes).

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions most of which was structured in 5 points rating scale from 1 (positive) to 5 (negative) and only two of them

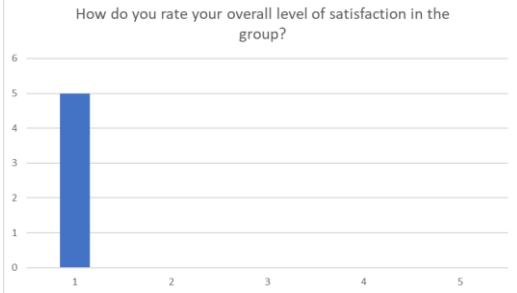

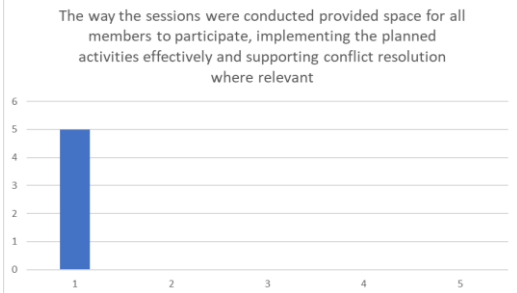




(n. 11 and n. 12) were open-ended questions.

All the participants (5 subjects) answered the questionnaire and the results are represented in the following tables.: Table 1 shows the participants' evaluation on the 5 points rating scale while Table 2 shows their responses to the open-ended questions.

**Table 1**

1. How do you rate your overall level of satisfaction in the group?	100% of the respondents rated this item with a 1	 <p>How do you rate your overall level of satisfaction in the group?</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Percentage	1	100%	2	0%	3	0%	4	0%	5	0%
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2. The group was a safe and supportive environment, with respect and confidentiality. The instructions for the exercises were relevant to my process and were stated with sensitivity.	100% of the respondents rated this item with a 1	 <p>The group was a safe and supportive environment, with respect and confidentiality. The instructions for the exercises were relevant to my process and were stated with sensitivity.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Percentage	1	100%	2	0%	3	0%	4	0%	5	0%
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3. The way the sessions were conducted provided space for all members to participate, implementing the planned activities effectively and supporting conflict resolution where relevant.	100% of the respondents rated this item with a 1	 <p>The way the sessions were conducted provided space for all members to participate, implementing the planned activities effectively and supporting conflict resolution where relevant</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>100%</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0%</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Percentage	1	100%	2	0%	3	0%	4	0%	5	0%
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<p>4. I gained a positive perception of myself and my self-care habits</p>	<p>The majority of the subjects (3 people) rated this item with a 2 while 2 people rated it with a 1</p>	<p>I gained a positive perception of myself and my self-care habits</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Count	1	2	2	3	3	0	4	0	5	0
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<p>5. I learned new information about my nervous system which will help me support my mental hygiene.</p>	<p>The great majority of the subjects (4 people) rated this item with a 1 while only 1 person rated it with a 2</p>	<p>I learned new information about my nervous system which will help me support my mental hygiene.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Count	1	4	2	1	3	0	4	0	5	0
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<p>6. I learned strategies and approaches for self-care in support groups</p>	<p>The majority of the subjects (3 people) rated this item with a 1 while the remaining 2 people rated it with a 2 and a 3, respectively.</p>	<p>I learned strategies and approaches for self-care in support groups</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Count	1	3	2	1	3	1	4	0	5	0
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<p>7. These sessions have helped me realize that I have new options for managing my emotions, anxieties, depression, etc.</p>	<p>The great majority of the subjects (4 people) rated this item with a 1 while only 1 person rated it with a 2</p>	<p>These sessions have helped me realize that I have new options for managing my emotions, anxieties, depression, etc.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Count	1	4	2	1	3	0	4	0	5	0
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4	0													
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<p>8. The sessions have helped me to experience a sense of belonging with the other people involved and / or a greater connection with my community or the world in general.</p>	<p>100% of the respondents rated this item with a 1</p>	<p>The sessions have helped me to experience a sense of belonging with the other people involved and / or a greater connection with my community or the world in general.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr></tbody></table>	Rating	Count	1	5	2	0	3	0	4	0	5	0
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<p>9. The sessions have helped me identify resources in my life that can support my mental health, including my strengths.</p>	<p>The great majority of the subjects (4 people) rated this item with a 1 while only 1 person rated it with a 2</p>	<p>The sessions have helped me identify resources in my life that can support my mental health, including my strengths.</p> <table border="1"> <tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr> </table>	Rating	Count	1	4	2	1	3	0	4	0	5	0
Rating	Count													
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<p>10. The sessions have made me feel like a more positive person about my future.</p>	<p>The majority of the subjects (3 people) rated this item with a 2 while 2 people rated it with a 1</p>	<p>The sessions have made me feel like a more positive person about my future.</p> <table border="1"> <tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr> </table>	Rating	Count	1	2	2	3	3	0	4	0	5	0
Rating	Count													
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4	0													
5	0													
<p>11. Would you recommend these groups and their facilitators to other people in the community?</p>	<p>100% of the respondents rated this item with a 1</p>	<p>Would you recommend these groups and their facilitators to other people in the community?</p> <table border="1"> <tr><th>Rating</th><th>Count</th></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr> </table>	Rating	Count	1	5	2	0	3	0	4	0	5	0
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**Table 2**

<p>11. Specify if there is anything else you take away from the group</p>
<p>S1 I</p>
<p>S2 I'm quite satisfied.</p>
<p>S3 The atmosphere of friendship that has been created between all, no barriers have been perceived and there has been no perception of psychoanalysis.</p>
<p>S4 It was a pleasure to meet Francesca, Zuzana e Maria (i knew already the other participants).</p>
<p>S5 Zero sense of judgment, a lot of compassion and delicacy.</p>
<p></p>
<p><b>12.</b> Please specify if there was something you missed in the group or something you believe could/should have been different.</p>
<p>S1 Everything was perfect, I would have liked more time to explore important concepts, maybe. More on sex.</p>
<p>S2 Very pleasant and relaxing... I could connect with myself. And more.</p>
<p>S3 It's a pity there were only five sessions.</p>
<p>S4 I had not created any particular expectations in this regard, I was initially just curious, well I found myself waiting with trepidation for the arrival of the following Sunday to see you again. In short, everything was superb! Thank you.</p>
<p>S5 I missed the "meditation" part, because I am very disconnected from my body and this caused me discomfort and tingling in different parts of the body.</p>





## Conclusion

The online format has demonstrated its sustainability in overcoming the distances between participants that would hinder the achievement of a single physical meeting place. Despite the limitations in the transmission of non-verbal signals, the spontaneity of the interaction seems to be maintained and emotional information can flow. Existing restrictions are accepted by the participants and compensated. The quality of the sessions was appreciated by all. Since the usual mode of meetings of the Association is online, the possibility of face-to-face meetings has not been contemplated. However, the face-to-face modality would be preferable to take full advantage of the potential of experiential methodologies and quality group support.

Overall, the format adopted was successful, so much so that both the president of the Association and the members (in a separate location) asked for the opportunity to continue the experience. Given the three-month extension of the project, two more meetings have been agreed in April and May.

The psycho-education proposal linked to the use of experiential techniques focused on the body has favoured a better understanding of the mind-body states and moods that affect perception and behaviour. Participants also rediscovered and enhanced the personal resources that contribute to the maintenance of well-being and the faster recovery from states of emotional dysregulation: for example, one participant renewed his interest in drawing, another became more aware of the possibility of using friendships to recover from moments of difficulty and depression. The proactive orientation to the search for well-being was in a certain sense surprising for the participants and a complementary way to reconcile with the pain experienced in the past or in the present. It is our belief that traumatic experiences and victimization will have to find channels of expression, both in verbal and non-verbal forms such as dance therapy, art therapy, psycho-body-oriented-therapy. In fact, during the meetings moments of profound emotional and existential discomfort appeared for some participants who barely contained the emotional charge, despite a clear definition of the context oriented towards support and the search for well-being.

The encounters generated a context perceived as safe and supportive, they increased the sense of hope and self-efficacy in regulating their emotional states and offered some tools for emotional containment and regulation.



## Ausl of Reggio Emilia

“Identifies. A path to know identities and their variants.”

# ATTRAVERSO LE IDENTITÀ

Un percorso per (ri)-conoscere l'identità  
nelle sue varianti e sfaccettature

tutti i **GIOVEDÌ** a partire dal

**25 NOVEMBRE**

dalle **20.30** alle **22.00**

@ **SEDE ARCIGAY GIOCONDA**

sopra al Circolo Arci Gardenia  
v.le Regina Elena, 14  
42124 - REGGIO EMILIA

Per partecipare, è necessario  
avere **Green Pass** o tampone  
negativo nelle ultime 48h





## Objectives

- Provide opportunities for transgender people to discuss experiences and exchange ideas in a confidential, nurturing, safe and supportive environment
- Promote empowerment
- Promote resilience
- Promote self-awareness
- Provide psychoeducation physiology of emotions and the polyvagal theory
- Provide strategies for coping with stress
- Provide services and resources for post-traumatic stress
- Develop connections with others
- Promote community building

## Methodology

A Self-help Group is composed by members of a community who have similar problems and together share experiences and discuss.

The capability approach is the framework; its main characteristic is the focus on what people are effectively able to do and to be.

The techniques include role-playing, think-pair-share, peer teaching, debates, brainstorming, data and tools, somatic exercise, relaxing techniques and storytelling.

Each session had the following structure: presentation of the theme; individual or couple exercises; somatic awareness exercises; group discussion; conclusions.

The workshops were led by one facilitator: Margherita Graglia (psychotherapist, Switch trainer).

## Participants

Participants were recruited from the local LGBT association: Arcigay Giocònda (Regina Elena street, 14, Reggio Emilia). Participants belong to the trans group of this association and others have been found



through social networks.

Total: 13 participants. Participants aged from 23 to 52 years from Reggio Emilia and Bologna.

### **Program and format**

18 November: *Focus group*

Focus groups has been used to collect data, generate ideas and receive input from specific target groups to organize the group.

*Face to face:*

25th of November 2021; title: The puzzle of identity

2nd of November 2021; title: Sexual orientation

9th of November 2021; title: Gender identities

16th of December 2021; title: Non binary identities

*Online (Zoom platform): due to the Covid-19 pandemic we had to suspend the meetings and organize them online):*

3rd of February 2022; title: Coming out

10th of February 2022; title: Coming out in the family

17th of February; title: Transnegativity and microaggressions

*Face to face:*

24th of February; title: Internalized homo-transnegativity

### **Content**

#### **Session 1 Focus group: 18th of November 2021**

A focus group was proposed to analyze participants' needs. The following needs emerged from the focus group, summarized in a few words: sharing experiences, to improve the knowledge of the identities and of the following topics: gender identity, non-binary identity, coming out, family, stigma, discriminations, internalized stigma and prejudice, community.

#### **Session 2 The puzzle of identity: 25th of November 2021**

Goals: To create the group; sharing group norms; to get to know the members of the group; to know the different identities; share personal experiences; express and manage emotions.



**Sessions 3-4-5 Sexual orientation (2nd of December 2021); Gender identities (9th of December 2021); Non-binary identities (16th of December 2021)**

Goals: To know the different sexual orientations and gender identities; to share your experiences; to recognize and express emotions; to recognize the emotions of joy and fear.

**Sessions 6 and 7 Coming out (3rd of February 2022); Coming out in the family (10th of February 2022)**

Goals: To learn about the coming out process; to tell experiences; to focus on resources and difficulties in coming out; to recognize and express emotions; to manage anxiety and fear; to learn about the experiences of coming out in the family and learn about the experiences of parents and children; to listen to a parent's testimony.

**Session 8 Transnegativity and micro-aggressions 17th of February 2022**

Goals: To know the social transnegativity; to recognize microaggressions; to identify community resources to manage stigma; to recognize minority stress; to manage minority stress; to share experiences.

**Session 9 Internalized homo-transnegativity 24th of February 2022**

Goals: know the internalization process of the stigma; stereotypes and prejudices within the trans community; manage shame, anger, victimization; share experiences; build a sense of community.

**Evaluation**

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS:

The instrument prepared by TRANSPARENT <https://forms.gle/LinzQjAodRA57qht8> was applied to evaluate the results.

Participants were asked to select a response to each question on a scale of 1 (positive) to 5 (negative).



1) How do you rate your overall level of satisfaction in the group?	Twelve people evaluate this point with 5 points and one person with 4 points.
2) The group was developed in a safe and supportive environment, with respect and confidentiality.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
3) The instructions for the exercises were relevant to my process and were stated with delicacy.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
4) The way the sessions were conducted, the follow-up and the composition of the group, provided space for all members to participate, implementing the planned activities effectively and supporting the resolution of any conflict should one arise.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
5) I gained a positive perception about myself and my personal care habits	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
6) I learned strategies and approaches for self-care in support groups	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
7) These sessions have helped me realize that I have new options for managing my emotions, anxieties, depression, etc.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
8) The sessions have helped me to experience a sense of belonging with the other people involved and / or a greater connection with my community or the world in general.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
9) The sessions have helped me identify resources in my life that can support my mental health, including my strengths.	Twelve people evaluate this point with 5 points and one person with 4 points.
10) The sessions have made me feel like a more positive person about my future.	Twelve people evaluate this point with 5 points and one person with 4 points.





## QUALITATIVE RESULTS:

When asked: "How would you describe your experience in one word?"

These are the answers:

community; pride; future; positivity; humanity; inclusion; sharing; opening; freedom; complexity; empathy; resources; sense of unity.

## Leaflets

### ATTRAVERSO LE IDENTITÀ

Un percorso per (ri)-conoscere l'identità nelle sue varianti e sfaccettature

#### CALENDARIO INCONTRI

- 25/11/21 >> IL PUZZLE DELL'IDENTITÀ
- 02/12/21 >> GLI ORIENTAMENTI SESSUALI
- 09/12/21 >> LE IDENTITÀ DI GENERE
- 16/12/21 >> LE IDENTITÀ NON BINARIE
- 23/12/21 >> IL COMING OUT
- 13/01/22 >> IL COMING OUT IN FAMIGLIA
- 18/01/22 >> OMOTRANSNEGATIVITÀ INTERIORIZZATA



### ATTRAVERSO LE IDENTITÀ

Un percorso per (ri)-conoscere l'identità nelle sue varianti e sfaccettature

Incontri condotti dalla dott.ssa Margherita Graglia

#### INCONTRI ONLINE SU ZOOM

- 03/02/22 IL COMING OUT
- 10/02/22 IL COMING OUT IN FAMIGLIA
- 17/02/22 TRANSEGATIVITÀ E MICROAGRESSIONI
- 24/02/22 OMOTRANSNEGATIVITÀ INTERIORIZZATA



Tutti i GIOVEDÌ dalle 20.30 alle 22.00 presso la sede di Arcigay Gioconda  
Per partecipare, è necessario avere Green Pass o tampone negativo nelle ultime 48h



Tutti i GIOVEDÌ dalle 20.30 alle 22.00 su piattaforma Zoom Meeting  
Per partecipare, scrivere a [info@arcigaygioemilia.it](mailto:info@arcigaygioemilia.it)



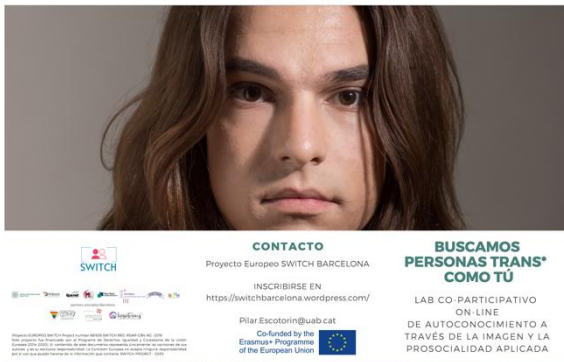


## 2. SPAIN

### Lipa Net Mirada Local

**SWITCH LAB: Self awareness Group through experiential photography, image and applied prosociality**

*Pilar Escotorin, Raquel Banchio*



Images: BARCELONA advertising leaflet, and a group picture, representation of the participants Barcelona SWITCH LAB

Barcelona's proposal was a co-creative and participatory Laboratory of self-knowledge through Experiential Photography, image and applied prosociality to build together with the participants a model of self-awareness and reinforcement of the prosocial quality of their own support networks

<https://switchbarcelona.wordpress.com/proximamente/>

It was designed as a "safe space" in which the participants felt comfortable to express their emotions and bond with each other as experts in their life and context. They were invited as co-investigators. Applying the principles of Participatory Action Research, the contents are constructed and evaluated with the participants, who apply the tools in their lives and share results.

#### Objectives:

- To build a method of self-awareness through photography as a resource for empathic communication
- To experiment with prosocial tools to identify and optimize their own





support networks.

### **Methodology:**

Before starting, to know in general terms the vital moment of each person, two individual interviews were conducted virtually with each person (approx. One hour each interview) to explain each participant the proposal, objectives and methodology. Next, a total of 12 online sessions were held through Zoom platform: 7 sessions for the EXPERIENTIAL PHASE (2-3 h each) and 5 for EVALUATION AND TECHNICAL TEAMWORK. 6 hours of one-to-one individual accompaniment sessions were carried out to deepen into more personal aspects that were emerging in the sessions; one to one meetings were also useful as tutorials for the personal projects that each person did with their own images. Once the Lab phase (experiential and application of the contents and tools in one's life) was finished, technical sessions are being held with the 6 participants who have decided to form part of the SWITCH team. At least 5 technical sessions have been carried out between 1-2 hours each session. In addition, the group itself decided that the most appropriate means of communication would be WhatsApp. WhatsApp group has maintained almost daily permanent communication since the group was created, transforming itself into a space for social and emotional support and reciprocal help. To protect this space as a safe and violence-free place, the joint decision was made to create an alternative WhatsApp group to share news or comments from activism and against transphobia.

### **Participants:**

The participants ranged from 27 to 56 years old from Canary Islands, Avila, Barcelona, Colombia, Edinburgh. This gave the group diversity of experiences and cultures. The call-invitation was made through our associated partners Kasa Trans \* and Colectivo Gamá.

The following requirements were proposed to participate: a) To be over 18 years old; b) To have openness and desire to know oneself as a person; c) be motivated to improve their own life and the live of other people; d) To be motivated to better connect with the world.

### **Session 1 - 09-30-2021**

Goals: a) To inform the participants of the Lab, its objectives, and



general purposes; b) To generate group cohesion; c) To generate a safe and healthy space by creating links between the participating people to achieve a feeling of belonging to the group and the project; d) To make a presentation of each member through the image through the dynamic called Photo presentation in which each person selects a photograph and then presents himself from that previously selected image.

### Session 1 First Results



Images Covisage @method

At the end of this dynamic, each person became aware of their emotions and priorities for the Lab process. Thanks to the work with the image, group cohesion was generated almost immediately.

### Session 2 – 10-07-2021

**Objectives: a) Generate space for creation and dialogue among the participants; b) Connect with emotions.**

During this session the resulting material of the week was viewed. As each participant shared the images they were taking, a natural dialogue was generated in which the experiences and problems of Trans\* people were shared. The dialog was about becoming aware of how each of the participants lived their day to day, sometimes automatically. Once the material was visualized, they worked in pairs, constructing a narrative with the photos selected from the general taking of photographs. It was a powerful dynamic because a space of trust and security was created. In that session, the feeling of belonging, mutual support, complicity, and empathy was consolidated in the group. In this second session, the proposal was definitively validated and consolidated. **IN ANNEX 1** you can see a sample of the results of this teamwork.





At the end of this session, **it was proposed to create a Visual Emotional diary**. Each day the participants had to connect with their emotions and select an image of a landscape, (previously they had been provided with an image bank with 30 images of different landscapes), then they had to take a self-portrait that represented that emotional state and create a diptych with both images.

### Session 3 Feeling Us - 02-14-2021

#### Objective: Connect with one's own emotions and how they influence the body and thought

During this session, the results of the participants' visual diaries were viewed. It was a revealing session, because everyone agreed on the importance of connecting and being aware of the emotions that were experienced and how they constantly change. The image helped them to become aware of them and to regulate them to achieve the necessary mental and emotional well-being.



Taking self-portraits also led them to consider the origin of those emotions. From his general malaise, in some cases this meant connecting with painful points in their transition that have to do with the past. To their surprise, the image made it easier for them to approach what was hurting them with a loving and healing gaze.

#### EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONAL DIARIES, SEE ANNEX 2

### Session 04 and 05: October 21 and October 28

**SWITCH** Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union

**Inventario de acciones prosociales SWITCH LAB octubre 2021**

*Se trata de aumentar la cantidad, calidad personal (centrada en las necesidades de las demás personas y no en las propias) y frecuencia de la mayoría de estas items hasta el final de nuestro LAB. Cada persona elige cómo y cuándo ejecutar estas acciones y elige cuáles ejecutar. Es importante no obligar a nadie a hacerlas, ni pedir excusas de por qué se hacen o no se hacen. Cada persona puede imprimir este listado y engancharlo en alguna parte visible de su casa o en algún cuaderno.*

1. Hacer un tratamiento fotográfico de las fotos en el que se vean las personas en interior y exterior	16. Escuchar atentamente, vaciándonos de las emociones para acoger la historia de los demás.
2. Dar/recibir sesión(es) de masaje, meditación, Reiki,...	17. Hacer preguntas de interés cuando alguien da su opinión
3. Dar ideas creativas y divertidas para autocuidarnos	18. [Escuchar activamente a las personas]
4. Ofrecer la propia biblioteca y enviar libros a quien los necesita	19. [Identificar posibles prejuicios que me surgen al escuchar a las personas para poder gestionarlos y que no interfiere en mi escucha activa]
5. Comparar un DÍCIMO de libros y compartir el premio	20. [Preguntar con qué problemas la persona quiere ser tratada]
6. Hacer una lista de películas para recomendar al grupo	21. [En temas complejos, antes de entrar en el tema preguntar cómo queremos abordar el asunto.]
7. [Escuchar a los demás personas sin interrumpir]	22. [Conectar con lo que la persona dice, transmitirle interés en la otra persona para saber cómo es su estado de ánimo.]
8. Escuchar con calma no verbales de alguien con la cámara escondida por el momento (respeto al ritual o otro tema en el momento)	23. [Dirigirme a la otra persona, interactuando, de manera positiva]
9. Escuchar atentamente, haciendo preguntas de interés para demostrar a las personas que estoy escuchando y que les aprecio	24. Hacer preguntas de interés sincero para comprender lo que las personas piensan y sienten
10. Valorar positivamente cada cambio de la transición que realiza una persona	25. [Tener cercanía psicológica para ayudar a expresar emociones a quien pudiera necesitarlo (banc, vnc, etc)]
11. Regalar del paso de la transición de la persona que quiere un evento	
12. Valorar un verbaleto (breve, sencillo) a cada persona como ser sincero y transparente	
13. Compartir experiencias positivas	
14. Crear espacios de interacción entre reuniones para seguir y activar nuestra imaginación en proyectos comunes a través de medios artísticos o digitales u otros creativos	
15. Verbalizar los dones (talentos) de las personas, subrayando aquello extraordinario que tienen o hacen, pero que se hacen por su forma de conciencia sobre sus capacidades.	

WEB: <https://switchbarcelona.com/>

The prosociality applied to life was presented and some elements of prosocial communication were worked on, such as prior, process and subsequent metacognition. The prosocial behaviors were presented using examples and each participant proposed possible prosocial actions to optimize the prosocial quality of the LAB. The procedure of PROSOCIAL INVENTORIES IN CONTEXT was applied in three phases: brainstorming 1) What prosocial action would I like to receive from the group? 2) What are the most desirable and feasible actions for me;



and 3) what PRIORITY actions we will select to increase our prosocial quality. The procedure was supported by one of the participants, a psychology student who helped to refine and justify the items and to adjust the wording so that each item was measurable and observable. The result was a diagnostic and evaluation instrument that was applied as a pre test and that will be applied as a post test once the process is finished in February. From the result of the evaluation of the items, it is observed that people evaluate themselves with a **7.1 (out of a maximum of 10)** regarding their own prosociality towards the group; but the average increases when evaluating how they see the prosocial quality of the group, **where the average is 8.2 (out of a maximum of 10)**. From the participatory analysis of the results, it is defined to propose to improve the selected actions in quantity, quality and frequency and a goal of 8 is proposed for the self-evaluations and 9 for the hetero-evaluation. This process will be completed in February 2022. **IN ANNEX 3** in Spanish, the infographic to summarize the instrument.

### **Sessions 06 and 07: November 4 and 18: Express ourselves Pt. 1 and 2**

These sessions were the concluding sessions of the photography part in which the participants presented a final visual and representative work of the personal process that each person had experienced in self-knowledge through the image. All agreed on the value of this process and on the use of the image to know themselves from a perspective that they had never experienced and tried before. The image helped them to look inside, to become aware of the entire path traveled during their transitions. In addition, one of the participants, a musician, composed a piece of music for piano and transverse flute that represent her transition process. The musical score will be included in the final book of SWITCH LAB process and that will probably be performed and recorded by two of the participants from LAB Barcelona. **Sample of final works see ANNEX 4**

### **Quantitative results**

The instrument prepared by TRANSPARENT <https://forms.gle/LinzQjAodRA57qht8> was applied ONLINE to evaluate the results with more quantitative indicators that allow comparing experiences between countries. Here are the results of this questionnaire. In this questionnaire, the level of satisfaction with the process was used on a scale of 5, with 1 being the minimum number and 5 the maximum. **Six of the 7 participants answered the Follow Up questionnaire.** One participant dropped out at the end of the process



due to personal problems.

1. How do you rate your overall level of satisfaction in the group?	The majority indicate a satisfaction level 5 (N5) and one person a satisfaction level 4
2. The group was developed in a safe and supportive environment, with respect and confidentiality.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
3. The instructions for the exercises were relevant to my process and were stated with delicacy.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
4. The way the sessions were conducted, the follow-up and the composition of the group, provided space for all members to participate, implementing the planned activities effectively and supporting the resolution of any conflict should one arise.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
5. I gained a positive perception about myself and my personal care habits because of working with this SWITCH CO-PARTICIPATORY LAB.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
6. I learned strategies and approaches for self-care in support groups	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
7. These sessions have helped me realize that I have new options for managing my emotions, anxieties, depression, etc.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
8. The sessions have helped me to experience a sense of belonging with the other people involved and / or a greater connection with my community or the world in general.	Five people evaluate this point with 5 points and one person with 3 points.
9. The sessions have helped me identify resources in my life that can support my mental health, including my strengths.	100% of the responses rate this item with a 5
10. The sessions have made me feel like a more positive person about my future.	Five people evaluate this point with 5 points and one person with 3 points.

**When asked: What have you taken from this experience? These are the answers**





- *"It seems to me that the proposal of the match between prosociality and self-knowledge through the image is excellent. The image is a very versatile tool. In my experience within the lab, I see that with the image it was possible to internally address the historical, the symbolic, the unconscious, the present, the transcendental and has allowed me transformation, expression, assertive communication, acceptance of myself and others, the improvement of my self-concept, generating changes in daily life that translate into well-being and a feeling of connection with life itself.*
- *"It has opened me again to approach the trans issue from a renewed perspective, calm and without fear of being judged by other people from the LGBTIQ community"*
- *"It has encouraged me to share and listen openly to other people with trans \* life experiences"*
- *"Even more desire to share, give and learn"*
- *"Prosocial communication is a new concept for me and necessary to grow. Experiential photography experiences have been very fruitful. Free expression without prejudice has also been essential. Thanks a lot"*
- *"A support group, new friends and a big milestone in my life"*

## Conclusions

The online format did not detract from the quality of the sessions, it was not equally valued by all. Several prefer face-to-face encounters and to some persons it seemed that the time was insufficient for the experiential phase. However, the format was a success and generated a quality support network among people from various geographies who otherwise would not have known each other.

Self-awareness through images helped trans\* people to address and reconcile with the pain experienced in childhood and adolescence, demonstrating that the image - with proper facilitation - can help trans\* people to recognize and talk about their transition process. The work with the image helped the participants to celebrate their existence, fleeing from victimization without falling into a "magical" reality either.

After the process, the participants noticed changes in their way of looking at themselves, feeling, living and relating both to themselves and to the environment they inhabit.

The LAB showed the contribution of the image as a tool to be applicable in processes of self-awareness of Trans \* people.

The applied Prosociality generated a security framework to create a secure support network with participatory rules that favored creativity,



identity, and self-esteem. It also allowed to provide a framework in which people voluntarily wanted to transform the LAB into a work team, proposing creative material, actively collaborating in the project and even tutoring other trans\* people. In this way, a horizontal relationship was created with the facilitators as a team. The experience of the LAB Barcelona model has been highly satisfactory and will be reflected in a final book of the process in which we continue working, ideally to be able to present it at the end of February 2022.

**Some verbatim phrases of the participants are reproduced**

What did you like the most about this process?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I would repeat the work with the photographs, which is what has made me take off. It has been impressive "</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I have gone much faster and deeper to 'places' where I had not gone before with therapy"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "If I had worked with images when I defined myself as a trans* person, it would surely have been much faster and less painful. It would have been easier and more fluid "</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Thank you for teaching me prosociality. I want to apply it to my day to day, I want to apply it to the world "</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "In the trans* collective we need more prosociality. There are many wars between trans* people "</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I value that you see us as co-researchers."</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "In a single word, between photography and prosociality I can Understand more, my ability to understand both my inner and outer world was expanded"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I really liked that in this space the space was taken care of from prosociality (referring to the extra Whatsappgroup that was created to avoid sharing violent news). I have always felt a bit obliged with respect to activism. It was important to find this space where I feel that I can share myself as I am, and I decide not to bring up the issues of trans* struggles or political issues. It was reassuring for me "</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Suddenly we have drawn a relationship between us in the virtual world of sincere and unpretentious contribution in return. That seems to me the most beautiful thing about prosociality, because it opens us to this more conscious world around being people and being the people, we want to be; and learn to have another relationship with our past, because yes, indeed, we cannot change it, but there is a possibility of the future. What is plotted in the present can give us other ways of relating to the future. This laboratory has been another way of feeling the transition "</li> </ul>
Benefits of the Lab in your own life
<p>"I am a person with my dark side. But it is true that it costs me much less to enjoy things. Now I enjoy everything so much more. Before I tried to do it, but now I do it. I am more perceptive. I see positive things more simply than before."</p>
"Many things have happened here that do not happen in therapy because we also have



more assiduity"
"Recently I was ashamed to take photos because I had my mother's voice that is always crushing me. I had not seen the positive side of taking photos of myself before. I liked doing the visual diary "
"I have a damage with my inner child, and I have been working a lot on that. But this "door" was opened to me with the image. Since we've been in the LAB, I've put photos of myself in frames that I've never done before. Thanks to this LAB, I am invading my universe of pictures of myself, my childhood. This photo (shows a photo) has opened wide horizons for me. This morning I looked at myself and said Good morning X, how beautiful you are! So, the picture that I used to have as something forbidden and hidden on my computer, now I took them outside and I will continue to do this ".
"Thanks to the concept of prosociality, it helped me understand that my mother does not perceive my help as help. I started to relate to her differently. My personal work involves communicating better and prosociality was very important to me "
"I understood something very deep about myself. I felt like I had to explain my life. The need to have to explain to people everything about me. Where does this need to be explanations of my life come from?
"I have been able to look at myself a little more closely, as I have never done before, and that has helped me to consolidate little by little and to feel that I am moving forward"
"Something has been revealed to us, it seems that this knowledge through photography has been very powerful. It has been another way of relating to the past from another point of view, not always from the agony, from discrimination. Another way to see our life, not being always self-indignant with our past "
Did you know other trans * people? What has this group meant to you?
"In other groups we were going to cry. I like in this group that we are diverse. I have felt very comfortable, and I have learned a lot about the trans * world "
"I like the feeling of not being victimized"
"The attitude is. Look where I am and where we have arrived "
"I like that idea of look, we are here, but we will go further"
"I had never been in a Trans * group where I did not feel inadequate, or my story was invalidated. The groups where I was, I couldn't say anything because I didn't have a tragic story "
"I had never felt that my experience was worth, that my self-knowledge was validated. It was very important to me. Get together, but not feel less, or victims "
"Another thing, I liked this cultural plurality. It was important to me. It seems very valuable to me to change countries".
"For me this group has been like finding my tribe. I've always felt very nomadic, not binary. And I have found these people who provide me with this knowledge about their vision of the world and how they live and advance. "





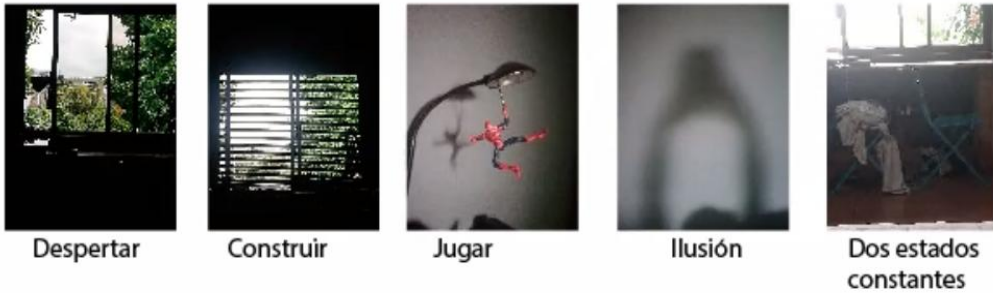
## Results of teamwork via ZOOM platform

### Example 1: result of group work in Zoom room

Un día a las 7:30 am  
Me levanto con miedo a mi salida, pero me doy cuenta de la utopía  
De la paz que me da conectar con mi yo interior.

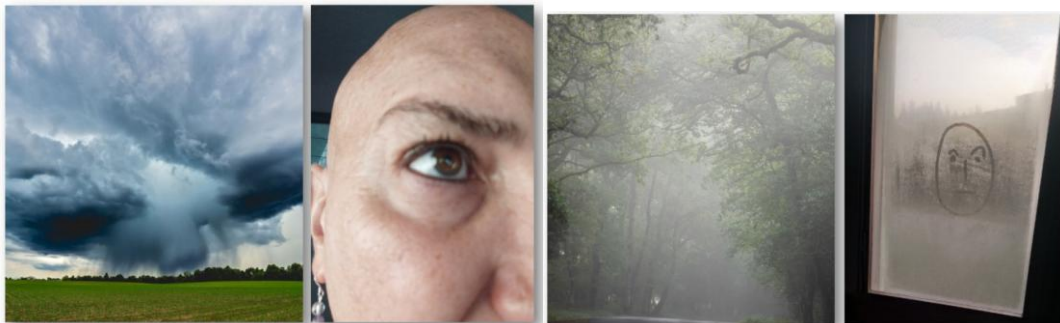


### Example 2: result of group work in Zoom rooms



Al despertar aparecen dos estados constantes, como dos caminos, uno llevaba a construir, el otro a un acantilado. En cualquiera de los dos estados, lo importante es conservar la ilusión de ese despertar, se trataba de la tranquilidad de jugar cada día, de ser yo. Ir y volver en los caminos te permitire volar, y no elegir ninguno es lo mismo que elegir perderse, en inevitable huir hacia tu felicidad

### Examples of emotional diaries





DOMINGO 10 DE OCTUBRE

Soy un mar de lágrimas, quizás y es el remordimiento que me hace no salir de la cama hoy, pedirme disculpas y revisar nuevamente las heridas.



MIERCOLES 13 OCTUBRE



Un peso menos, una vuelve a respirar de verdad. Porque cuando una calla por mucho tiempo, los pensamientos se vuelven costras. Tuve mucho miedo, pero haberlo hecho ha sido la pomada a muchos de mis estallidos emocionales sin control ninguno. No podía seguir así, no podía no decirle que estaba enamorada... Mis fantasmas atormentaron a mi intuición y la hicieron equivocarse. El/Ella/Elle también lo está de mi.

A sample of the final works





## 3. CZECH REPUBLIC

### Transparent

#### Objectives

- Build awareness of self-care habits, strategies and growth areas
- Provide psychoeducation on the polyvagal theory and physiology of emotions
- Practice strategies to soothe stress, build emotional awareness and resilience
- Build positive self-regard, dignity, appreciation, drawing on positive psychology and concept of post-traumatic growth
- Support connection with others and community building

#### Methodology

##### Background concepts

The workshop facilitators drew upon the concepts of polyvagal theory, positive psychology, somatics and art therapy to offer a holistic approach. Facilitators work with a trans-positive, trauma-informed, peer-learning/non-hierarchical approach to offer embodied and expressive arts activities, psychoeducation and discussion for integrating emotional and cognitive processes.

#### Format

We aimed to offer a diversity of formats, in terms of online/live meetings and closed series/open drop in one-off events to address diverse needs and preferences. In the end it was possible to hold only one in-person workshop in the summer of 2021 at Prague Pride. The remainder of the workshops took place online due to the COVID pandemic restrictions. This had the advantage of ensuring access for people across the country, those finding it difficult to leave the house due to illness/disability or social anxiety.

We offered a series of 4 weekly workshops to a closed group (Self-care series, spring 2021), 3 one-off workshops thematic workshops (summer and winter 2021/2: Coming out; Christmas Holiday Self-care; Looking back, looking forward: what I want in 2022) and an open series of 3 workshops (Self-Care Series, early 2022).



## Participants

The workshops were advertised on Trans\*parent social media platforms and shared with other relevant organisations and communication channels, such as LGBT+ Psychologists Czech Republic + Slovakia. Participants were asked to complete a registration form which asked for personal details, information about current support needs and hopes/expectations about participating. This allowed us to modify our planned content according to participants' needs and clarify the objectives and limits of the workshops to registered participants. The number of participants was as follows:

Self-Care series 2021: 11

Prague Pride workshop, Coming Out: 27

Christmas Holiday Self-care: 5

Looking back, looking forward: what I want in 2022: 5

Self-Care series 2022: 12 (overall but not all attended every workshop)

Total: 60 participants.

## Content

Workshops had a basic structure and some common elements which was adapted to suit the particular theme and also adapted to the participants' needs arising during the workshop. Each workshop was opened thus:

- introduction to the theme, facilitators and communication rules
- welcome circle to share names, pronouns and hopes/expectations for the workshop
- icebreaker activities
- somatic practice to help people arrive in the space (grounding/orienting/somatic art activity)
- The following elements were then combined in an appropriate order for each workshop:
- psychoeducation
- reflection, discussion, peer sharing and support in small group/pair/whole group formats
- expressive artwork





- somatic practices

Each workshop was closed with reflection and closing feedback. This was done verbally and sometimes also through expressive arts.

### **Safety and participant wellbeing**

The workshops were led by two facilitators (experienced therapists for the LGBTQI+ community). We were explicit about the difference between support and therapy, and the rights and responsibilities participants have in a support workshop setting vs. therapeutic context.

At each workshop we established ground rules for respectful communication, safety and confidentiality and offered follow up support after the sessions to anyone who felt they needed it.

As the sessions were conducted on Zoom, we had the possibility to offer support to individuals in private breakout rooms during the workshop. This was not necessary but three participants received online follow-up support after workshops. In two cases they stayed online after the end of the workshop, and in one case support was provided through email.

All participants were provided with information about where to seek further support (legal, social, and therapeutic).

To ensure accessibility of online workshops, art activities were designed to be accessible to those with the most basic art supplies and participants were contacted in advance and asked to have ready some simple materials (paper, pencils/few coloured pens). We were aware that making artwork is unfamiliar for most people in the context of a support group. We reassured participants that the objective is not to make “beautiful” or “good” pictures, but to experience a process and express oneself visually, without judgement.

Somatic exercises were offered in an adaptable and inclusive way to ensure comfort for all bodies and validate all types of experience.

### **Evaluation**

All participants at online workshops were asked to complete a feedback form after each series or one-off workshops in order to collect quantitative and qualitative feedback which was used to



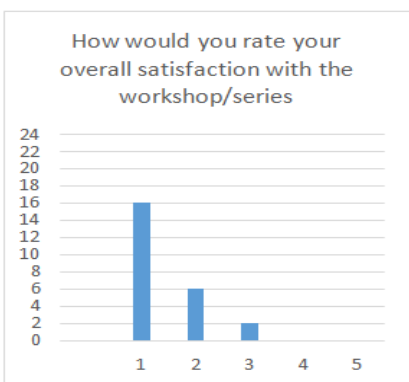
inform the following workshops/series. The feedback form had some questions which were used for every series/one-off workshop, but was adjusted or shortened sometimes for the one-off workshops. The participants were asked to select a response to each question on a scale of 1 (positive) to 5 (negative).

We did not ask participants to complete a feedback form at the Prague Pride workshop due to limited time in the programme. Instead open feedback and reflections were invited in the closing circle.

Number of responses:

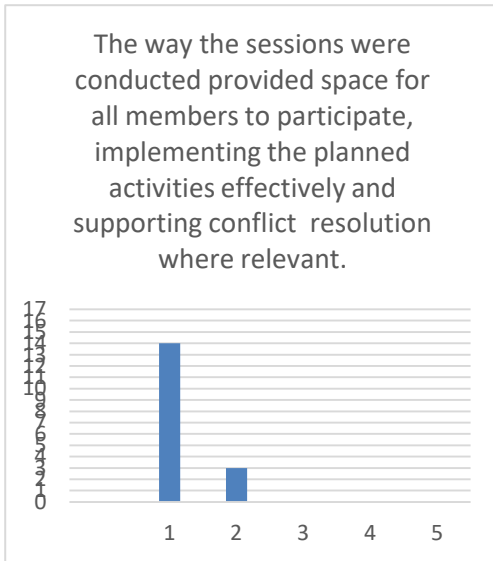
- Self-Care series 2021: 9
- Christmas Holiday Self-care: 3
- Looking back, looking forward: what I want in 2022: 3
- Self-Care series 2022: 7

**Series 2021, 2022 and two online workshops:**

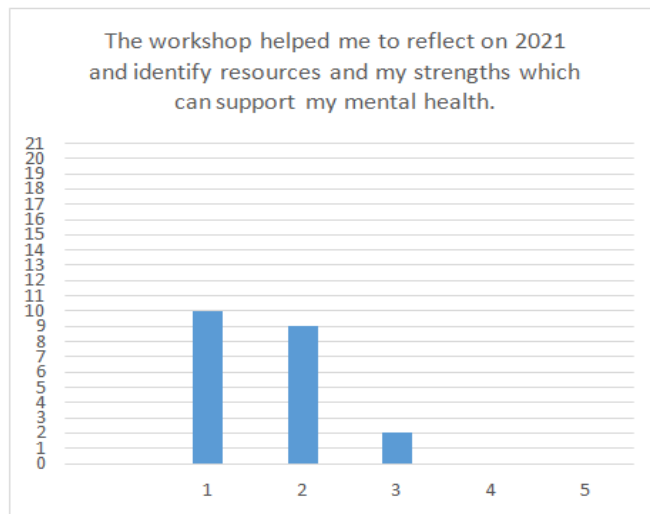
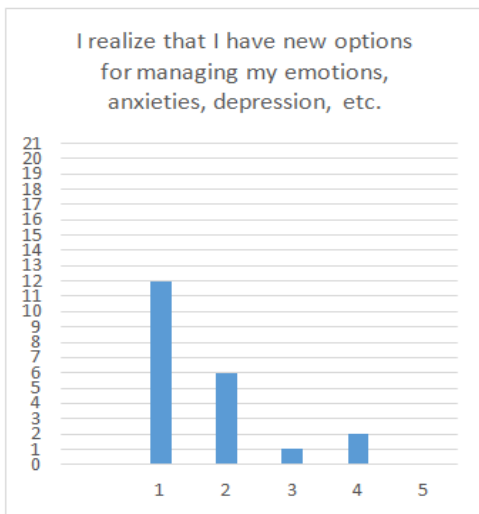




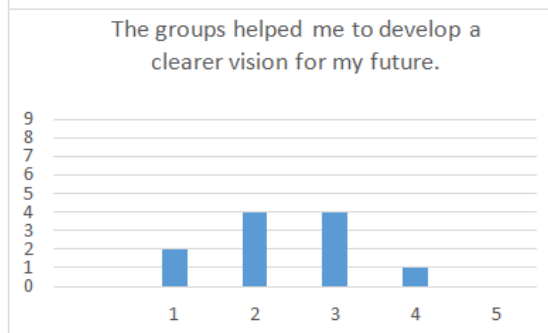
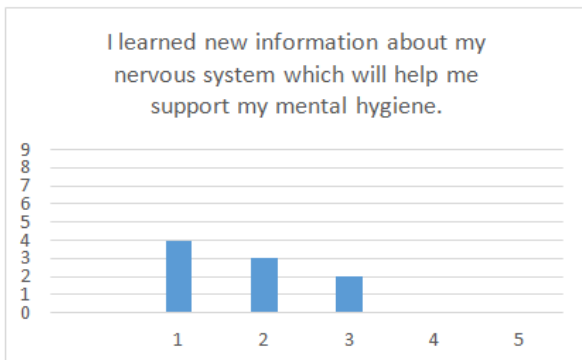
### Series 2021, 2022



### Series 2021, 2022 and Christmas self-care workshop



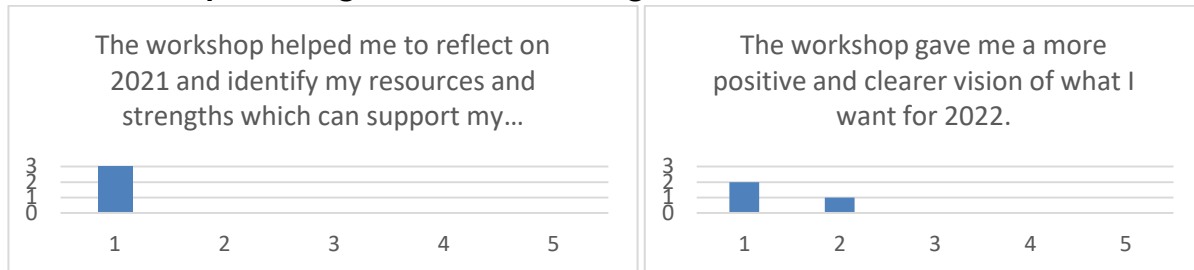
### Series 1





After the first series, we reduced the amount of psychoeducation content regarding the nervous system as participants reported they felt there was too much information to take in.

### Workshop Looking Back and Looking Forward



### Annex 1: Workshop plans

All workshops were “bookended” with introductions and closing reflection (see Content section for details). For the sake of brevity, the following outlines describe only the main body of the workshop.

### Self-care Series 2021

#### 9.6.2021 Workshop 1: Getting to know yourself and learning about your own self-care habits.

- Introductions
- Visual self-care inventory: how do I take care of my basic needs in various areas (physical needs, time alone, time with others, time in nature/spirituality, cognitive stimulation)
- Creative activity - creating a safe place for an animal or other object.
- Reflection and discussion - what more could I do to take care of myself and what stops us from doing so?
- Psychoeducation:
  - Nervous system, negative bias, polyvagal theory.
  - The link between basic needs, emotional well-being and the state of the nervous system.
  - Rooted beliefs can influence our self-care habits.
  - Autonomic nervous system - understanding how we adapt to survive but that our habits may be outdated and can be changed.
- Expressive drawing activity to express tension/pain, and express





soothing movement

- Reflections and close

### **16.6.2021 Workshop 2: Building resilience by acknowledging, exploring and befriending emotions**

- Introductions
- Psychoeducation
  - Polyvagal theory and ladder, physiology of emotions.
  - Understanding the purpose of emotions: 1) Identify what is important/valuable to us; 2) Let us know we are alive - Motivate us to make changes; 3) Help us connect with others.
  - Learning how to feel our emotions rather than letting them overwhelm us: Know that their natural direction is meant to be temporary and time limited
  - Curiosity as a way of managing anxiety
- Reflection and discussion
  - What are my default emotions?
  - What are our glimmers and triggers?
- Art activity: drawing the emotions that resonate within you, drawing of what challenging emotions would look like when healed.
- Somatic activity: embodied learning: when have I felt joyful connection/trust and HOW TO IMAGINE IT if you can't remember a time.
- Somatic strategies for regulating the nervous system
- Reflections and close

### **23.6.2021 Workshop 3: Resilience, agency, and rewriting my narrative**

- Introductions
- Somatic activities: Grounding (I am here) Centering (I am focusing) on emotions.
- Art activity: drawing whatever I am feeling right now.
- Small group discussion and reflection: how does the process and describing your picture help you gain reflective distance, curiosity and understanding of emotions?
- Psychoeducation: Why do we do body-based work?
  - In reaction to experiences we feel emotions, from these emotions we make feelings, moods and states, and from this



we build thoughts about ourselves and about life.

- Neuroplasticity: We learned to live in a way that protected us. Now we can let go of these survival strategies and narratives and build positive narratives that help us live fuller lives and not get overwhelmed by the negative or forget that we can change our lives.
- Grounding (I get into the body) / Centering (I quiet my mind) / Orienting (I use my eyes to find resources in my environment to help me be in the here and now) / Movement (I change my chemical balance, I give myself options)
- Building practices for calming the nervous system: music, massaging the face and neck, rocking, repeated movements like knitting/sewing, tapping, butterfly hug, breathing
- Discussion: identifying our anchors: what habits help me? (Who, what, when, where and how?)
- Art activity: drawing yourself safe/blissful/calm
- Reflections and close

#### **30.6.2021 Workshop 4: Dignity, positive self-talk and intentions for myself**

- Introductions
- Somatic practice: Centering on the topic of dignity in reaction to President's transphobic speech this week
- Art activity: draw either on the topic of dignity OR how I feel about President's comments. Share and discuss.
- Psychoeducation: effects of negative self-talk
  - Negative self-talk can affect your mental and physical health: The release of catecholamines increases when stress is combined with negative self-talk.
- Small group discussion: environmental factors that influence my self-talk (family, community, institutions, social norms/historical practices, spirit/landscape/socio-political economic systems, etc.). Whole group sharing.
- Reflective writing: Write 3 positive affirmations to replace negative self-talk
- Art activity: identifying my strengths: Identify your own top 3-5 strengths using VIA Positive Psychology resources, and create a visual representation of myself with my strengths
- Visualisation: How I want to feel 3-6 months from now



- Reflections and close

### **3.8.2021 Prague Pride Workshop: Coming out**

- Introductions
- Somatic practice: centering in dignity and connection
- Structured reflection, writing and peer sharing: coming out safely, communication strategies, where to find support
- Community-building singing
- Art activity on our individual and collective potential: a seed contains its future inside it. Painting ourselves as a seed, a plant, and together creating our “community garden”.
- Reflections and close

### **22.12.2021 Holiday season self-care workshop**

- Introductions
- Grounding - What's important for me in this meeting? What are you wanting for yourself?
- Share concerns about upcoming holidays, time with families
- Draw emotions around what you feel around the holidays: describe, share, reflect on emotion now
- Shake/stretch it out
- Mindfulness exercise (glass of water) to be present in the here and now
- Psychoeducation and discussion:
  - Identifying “glimmers” (short emergency responses to stress to replace our typical automatic responses)
  - Identifying healthy anchors (long term things I can do for my wellbeing - honor my body's needs, find a friend, plan things to look forward to, gratitude, regular creative outlets, time in nature etc)
- Embodied learning: memory of having gotten through a stressful situation or imagine how you would have handled things differently to get through it. Visualize myself coping with whatever stressors will come my way.
- Personal commitment to wellbeing and self-care: share one kind thing I am going to do for myself over this next week, and one



strategy I commit to doing for myself daily.

- Community building: our wishes for each other
- Reflections and close

### **30.12.2021 Looking back, looking forward: letting go of last year and moving into the new year**

- Introductions
- Draw a picture to express how you feel right now. Share with group.
- Psychoeducation:
  - Accepting how we feel, distance and curiosity if it is a challenging emotion
  - Strategies to move out of feeling bad.
  - Explain negative bias and strategies to build up positive feelings to counter our natural negativity bias.
- Short centering/meditation on leaving 2021 behind and welcoming in 2022
- Written reflection on 2021: highs and lows through the seasons. What was your biggest challenge - how did you get over it and what did you learn about yourself? What am I grateful for? Sharing in group.
- Define last year in 3 words and put them into movement or gesture
- Shake it out, breathe
- Reflection: What can I let go of? Share: group witnessing, support and celebration.
- Looking forwards to 2022: discussion on self-talk, mind-set and habits.
- Written pledge for 2022: Where would we like to feel more love, respect and kindness toward ourselves as individuals and community and what actions can we take to help that happen? Share with group.
- Art activity: Visually characterise your year 2022
- Embodied learning - How do I want to feel next year?
- Share a wish for the people in the group
- Reflections and close

### **11.1.2022 Mindset - positive self-talk**

- Introductions



- Centering – what is important to you?
- Psychoeducation: mindset, self-talk and neuroplasticity
  - Where does our mindset come from? Patterns of thinking that originally kept us safe - we can let this go and re-write our story now the original conditions (danger/expectations) are no longer there.
  - Four types of self-talk (Catastrophizing, Polarizing, Filtering, Personalizing) and impact on health (releases stress hormones that increase cortisol, can shrink areas of the brain responsible for positive thinking, affects mood, weight control and heart).
  - Self-talk for LGBTQI people: social context
- Reflection through freewriting: where does my mindset come from?
- Psychoeducation: breaking the cycle and rewiring our brain
  - Confronting negative thoughts is the first step in breaking the cycle.
  - Replacing negative thoughts with positive ones through embodied experiences
  - What are often described as weaknesses also have their strengths (examples). So many of the beliefs about ourselves can be reframed or at least we can have self-compassion and understanding.
- Art activity: squiggle drawings - multiple perspectives, multiple stories, transformations
- Reflection: what is important to you? What is important to us is what we are. Find 3 strengths/positive qualities that you value about yourself. Write them down and say them out loud.
- Draw symbolic image which captures yourself from this perspective (abstract/realistic/integrate words).
- Visualization and embodied learning on myself with a nurturing mindset.
- Reflections and close

### **18.1.2022 Relationships and boundaries**

- Introductions
- Orienting and Centering - Themes in my relationships I want to work with today. Share
- Art activity: distance/proximity of shapes and types of the boundaries representing my relationships. Reflect and share. Draw the picture again: how would you actually want those shapes to look? Reflect –



what would it take to get there?

- Embodied learning: Reflect on a recent experience in a relationship that felt uncomfortable, or that you later regretted. Feel the body and notice what is happening internally. Think about how you would like your body to feel and then try on this new way of being in your body: play with strengthening, permeability, flexibility.
- Yes/no/maybe response training in pairs: Observe how you feel and how your body is shaped during each different response.
- Visualization on moving forward with a sense of agency and connectedness with my needs.
- Reflections and close

### **25.1.2022 Being at home in myself: safety, dignity and belonging in a transphobic world**

- Introductions
- Centering for dignity and relatedness
- Psychoeducation: Somatics and neuroscience reveal that we have inherent needs as humans—safety, belonging and dignity. What do we do when our socio-political structures deny this to certain groups?
- So, instead of waiting for society to give this to us, how do we find safety, dignity and belonging?
- By respecting ourselves, knowing ourselves, honouring what you know about yourself and respecting your boundaries, by being open to sharing ourselves with others
- Embodied learning: Finding safety, dignity and belonging inside us.
- Personal exploration: Knowing what we like is the first step to knowing ourselves. Think of an experience that felt important. What is important to me? 5 times why exercise in pairs.
- Psychoeducation: Radical acceptance - working with self-criticism as a prerequisite for safety and dignity in ourselves
- Reflective writing: Think of 3 criticisms, generally about trans people or personal to yourself. Write 3 positive statements countering these criticisms. Choose one and share it with the group.
- Resilience practice: Dealing with the frustrations of trans identity. What can I do even if I feel I am not where I want to be and I can't





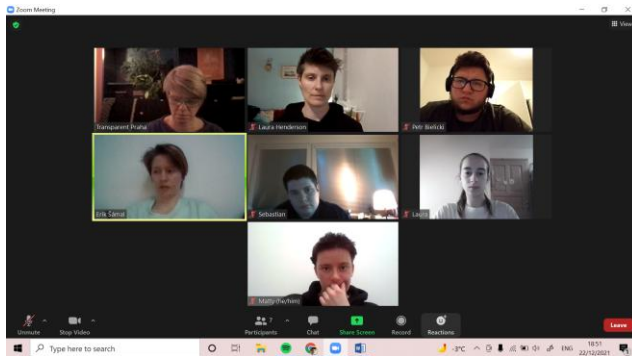
## REPORT ON SELF-HELP GROUPS



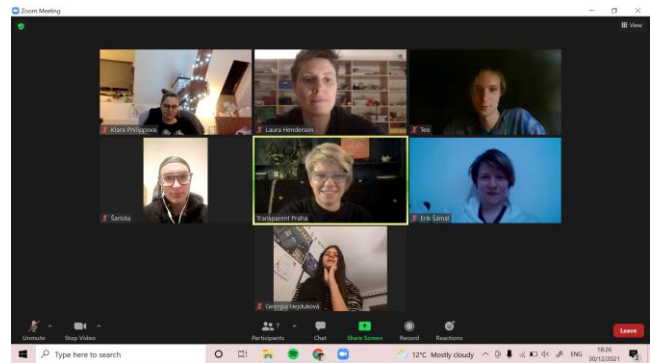
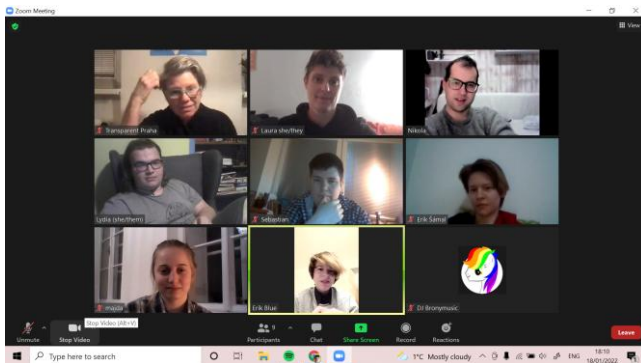
do anything about it? Treat myself with respect and care.

- Embodied resilience practice - building up tolerance to frustrations.
- Draw a plant/tree with images/affirmations of safety, dignity and connection drawn on as the flowers/branches/leaves.
- Reflections and close

**Screenshots from online workshops** (photos obtained with consent)



Screenshot of participants - Workshop 22.12.2021 and 30.12.2021



Screenshot of participants – Workshop 11.2.2022 and 18.1.2022



Screenshot of participants – Workshop 25.1.2022



## 4. ADDITIONAL OUTPUTS

In addition to the above-included outputs and the prospective continuation of the activated support groups, there are publicly accessible results of the work of the groups in individual countries. We are including some of them below:

Book produced by Lipa Net Mirada Local for download here:

<https://switchbarcelona.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/automiradas-transicionales-divulgaciocc81n-2.pdf>



Video produced during self-help groups by Lipa Net Mirada Local (Spain) for download here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_9FgWd19Hw&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_9FgWd19Hw&t=1s)

Music composition produced during self-help groups by Lipa Net Mirada Local (Spain) for download here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvtmE1v1JXI>

A video is being released for promotion of upcoming self-help groups on the website of Transparent (Czechia):

[www.jsmetransparent.cz](http://www.jsmetransparent.cz)