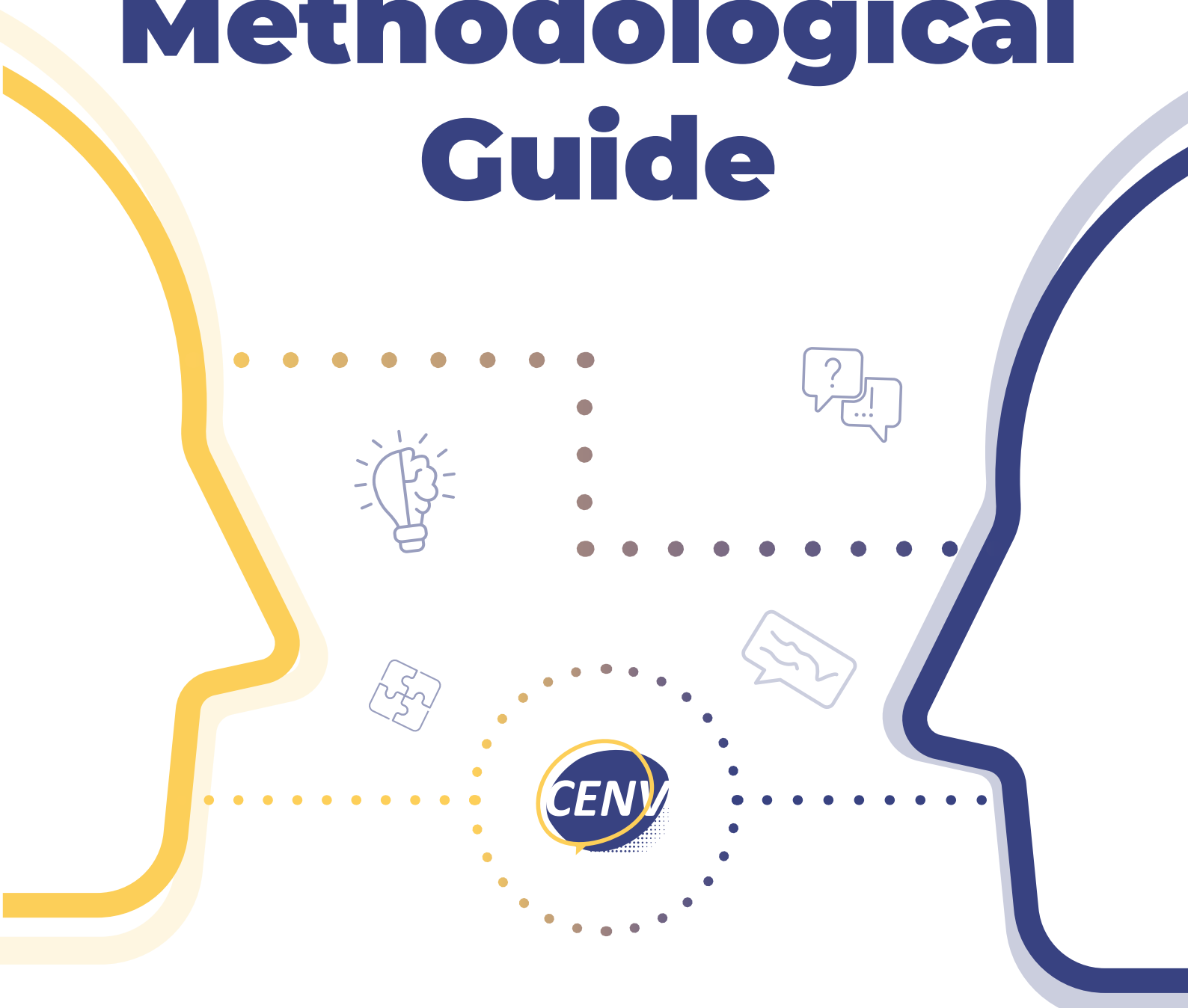# Methodological Guide

CENV

for facilitators of the **"Communication upskilling for people with fewer opportunities, based on Forum-Theatre and assertive communication methods"** **module**

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I) INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the CENV project

Our CENV project called "Towards European Non-Violent Communication: All on stage" is part of a European partnership for cooperation in adult education. This project is developed by several European organisations from multiple countries: STOP KLATKA in Poland, GIOLLICOOP in Italy and XIXA in Spain, all work in the field of Forum Theatre and in training. FUTURA GESTIONA in Spain and LE COMPTOIR DES COLIBRIS in France both work in the field of social and professional integration, upskilling and training.

In the analysis of our initial needs based on our experience in the field, we noted that adults in specific integration situations (unemployed and looking for work, in a subsidised employment with the aim of finding a long-term employment, etc.) often suffer from a lack of self-confidence, which is reflected by difficulties in communicating at work or in social relationships, either through shyness and poor self-efficacy, fear of hurting or offending others, questioning the legitimacy of speaking out, using an aggressive behaviour to protect oneself, etc. These situations of deficient communication lead to a negative spiral (clashes that should not have happened, demonstration of a withdrawal, coupled with a feeling of discomfort and frustration) that contribute to reinforce negative self-esteem and hinder social and professional integration (by limiting people from speaking out, encouraging self-censorship and withdrawal).

That is why, the motivation behind this project was to develop innovative tools for the integration or adults' training, focusing on multiple areas:

- To enable the target audience to discover new communication methods, such as assertive, empathic and non-violent communication (NVC), to help them acquiring a greater self-confidence at work.

- To ensure that these new methods are put into practice on a daily basis, and to develop implementation tools such as Forum Theatre. To develop and re-use these methods in their personal or professional life, depending on their career path.

- To raise awareness and train facilitators to these methods and to how to disseminate it to the target audiences.

- To disseminate the methods and approaches developed in training and support organisations for these target groups in our various European countries.

We started with the hypothesis that the adult target audience of our project would benefit greatly (both professionally and personally) from an introduction to new approaches based on assertive, empathic, non-violent communication methods and on Forum-Theatre. Audiences would develop new abilities (communication techniques) and interpersonal skills linked to an awareness of their own feelings and emotions, coupled with real and genuine interactions. The Forum-Theatre approach would reinforce social emancipation through a process which includes progressive awareness of one's social position, the development of one's self-esteem, self-confidence and finally expression and communication about one's actions in a wider social universe.

Together, we have therefore created a communication support module for people with fewer opportunities (supported in the field of professional integration and adult training) based on Forum Theatre and assertive communication methods, combined with the use of a collective logbook. The programme's objectives are **to encourage participants to acquire self-confidence and to develop communication skills in both work and personal environments.**

Chronological organisation of our collective research work:

◆ Varied conceptual research.

◆ Participation in a Forum-Theatre training to assertive and non-violent communication, where teaching and training activity were ran by Giollicoop in the form of workshops in Italy. This was intended to both trainers and professionals from all partners organisations and aimed at helping them to implement this approach and make it their own. A group of volunteers from the target audiences attended an introduction to Forum-Theatre, in order to understand the method and its objectives and to disseminate it to their peers.

◆ Proposed content and approach.

◆ First pilot test with target audiences in workshops in France, Poland and Spain.

◆ Evaluation and fine tuning.

◆ Second pilot test with target audiences in workshops in France, Poland and Spain.

◆ Fine tuning, final drafting.

The CENV project produced four separate yet interdependent outputs from the project:

1. **A practical guide to creating, using and implementing a collective logbook (OI1).**

2. **This methodological guide** is intended for adult's education organisations wishing to develop the approach within their own structures. Its aim is to enhance the knowledge of future organisations and to promote the spread of the process. (OI2)

3. A document on how to implement the "Communication upskilling for people with fewer opportunities, based on Forum-Theatre and assertive communication methods" module. (OI3)

4. A practical guide to lead Forum Theatre activities which supports the creation of scenic and cultural modules adapted to the context of the project, aimed at explaining methods and processes of the Forum Theatre, with useful advices and techniques for the module leaders, illustrated by experimental experiences within our structures (OI4).

Finally, the "CENV, All on stage!" project provides tools for:

Reflecting on needs and emotions.

Increasing self-awareness and empathy.

expressing in an assertive and resolutive manner.

We are convinced that these tools will help people improve their ability to manage relationships and conflicts constructively, in order to understand, express, act and change reality for the better...

However, we are aware that in specific contexts, good communication is not enough and does not solve everything. Where there are imbalances of power and interest, communication alone is likely to end up being ineffective, frustrating or counter-productive. So our aim is not to suggest that good communication always works. Good communication can certainly help and facilitate, particularly in the job market. However, through the Forum Theatre, the project also aims to provide tools to awaken the critical awareness needed to detect situations where imbalances of power and interests are predominant.

1.2 How and why to use this guide?

The guide was designed in two parts.

The first part presents the theoretical basis and approach of the CENV project, as well as how the different methods were combined and implemented during the testing and evaluation phases.

The second part intends to clarify the stages of the launch with multiple considerations, recommendations, practical tools and advices for professionals and facilitators who wish to reproduce the method and introduce this content during workshops and in their daily activities. All these suggestions are the result of feedback, self-assessment and evaluation of testing experiences in three of the partner organisations (Futura Gestiona, Stop Klatka and Comptoir des Colibris) who conducted two workshop processes to provide practical suggestions and tools.

By using this methodological guide, professionals from different fields working with adults with fewer opportunities can acquire in-depth knowledge and understanding of how to introduce, to combine and to successfully use multiple of tools in the field of assertive communication and Forum Theatre to tackle the issues faced by these target groups in their professional and personal lives.

Beyond the usefulness of this guide for adult education, it represents a valuable development material for the professionals themselves by raising awareness and emphasising the importance of using assertive behaviour, theatre and other creative methods to better support and evaluate the people we work with in a meaningful and sustainable way.

> It is highly recommended to use this guide coupled with the whole intellectual results developed within the CENV project, in particular the training module (OI 3) designed jointly with the theatrical and scenic modules (OI4) to obtain the best results in the application of a holistic methodology based on assertive communication and the Forum Theatre.

1.3 The charter to implement the approach

We would like to emphasise the commitments that we feel are essential to the successful implementation of the CENV project in the organisations involved.

From our point of view, it is very important that management and professionals (trainers, social workers specialised in professional integration, Forum Theatre specialists) become aware of the CENV approach as a whole and go along the values linked to the project's emancipation objectives; and that they engage the specific professional postures set out in the 4 tools before doing any practical implementation within the structures.

The organisation therefore commits to respect:

- A chronological and comprehensive reading of the various tools before implementing the approach (in order, we recommend OI 2, OI 3, then OI 1 and OI 4).
- The key concepts, points to watch out for, recommendations and thoughts highlighted in this guide and in the 3 other tools (OI 1, OI 3 and OI 4).

The organisation that engage the CENV approach also commits to develop or maintain the skills needed by the professionals responsible for the implementation itself with the audience, especially to be comfortable and efficient in setting up and running the "Communication upskilling for people with fewer opportunities, based on Forum-Theatre and assertive communication methods" module (see part 3.1).

II) THEORETICAL APPROACH AND DEFINITIONS

Our CENV project is inspired by several thinkings and points of view that are sometimes diverging:

- Non-violence has two main different approaches: on the one hand as it has been approached by sociologists, political scientists and anthropologists linked to political struggle, conflict management and civil disobedience; on the other hand as it has been approached from a psycho-humanist point of view, as a means of communicating according to one's own personal needs and in line with psychological theories on multiple intelligences.

- The project also combines a deterministic approach (for instance, Rosenberg's philosophy which says that needs and emotions are universal and identical for all human beings, regardless of their culture) with a constructivist approach, i.e. the power relations and intersectionality emphasising the importance of cultural context, and power relations in the creation, expression and understanding of emotions which means that emotions are not necessarily universal.

- Theatre of the Oppressed is also close to a constructivist approach.

This section introduces to the principles and broad outlines of Forum Theatre, followed by an overview of the various theoretical, political and psychological approaches to non-violence, empathic/assertive communication, emotional intelligence and assertive behaviour, as well as teaching tools on assertive communication.

2.1 Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum-Theatre

2.1.1 The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) method

In the CENV project we have been using Forum-Theatre, which is one among the several techniques of the Theatre of Oppressed (TO) method invented by Augusto Boal.
This method was inspired by Brazilian popular theatre and the ideas of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire. Boal adapted and developed these ideas to create a form of interactive theatre capable of directly involving the audience in exploring and resolving social conflicts.
TO is based on solidarity between oppressed people and their allies. It is a matter of "political" theatre, as it aims to facilitate social change, but it is not "ideological" in Boal's view, as it pursues the awakening of a critical consciousness coherently with the pedagogical ideas of Freire. Thus, it is based on the principle of **maieutic** from Socrate, i.e. the art of questioning people in a way that allows them to discover the truth . Applied to Forum-Theatre and its political dimension, it consists of questioning to push the audience to find solutions to a specific oppression, staged without manipulating or indoctrinating them.

Dialogue is also a TO key concept: there is the dialogue between actors and spect-actors but also the dialogue between social classes, genders, ethnic groups, cultures. However, dialogue is not conceived as a simple oral exchange, it implies mutual respect between people and their own needs. The dialogue is based on a balance of power. Where there are inequalities, the purpose of the dialogue is first of all to establish a new balance, to empower the weaker side.

2.1.2 Definition and basic concepts of the Forum-Theatre

As a tool within TO, Forum-Theatre is based on the idea that theatre can be an instrument used to explore, analyse and find solutions to social problems. Instead of presenting a conventional performance to a passive audience to inform/entertain/teach the audience, Forum-Theatre invites the audience to become actors in theatre and in life, to explore their daily life and to transform it. In a Forum-Theatre performance, a situation of conflict reflects social reality are presented. The spect-actors can come on stage at any time to change the course of the story and propose alternatives and solutions. A space for dialogue and participation is therefore created, in which answers are sought through collective experience.

Forum-Theatre is unique and effective in its practice thanks to a few principles:

- **The concept of the spectator becoming also an actor and the role of actors**

  From a spectator to an actor: the role of the "spectator"

  During a Forum-Theatre session, the traditional separation between actors and spectators is broken down. Participants become actors, taking on an active role as both spectators and actors. Thus, "spect-actors" (as Boal refers to them) are encouraged to intervene in the scenes, to stop the action, to take the place of the characters and to propose alternatives and solutions to the conflicts presented.

  This approach challenges the traditional notion of passive contemplation theatre and encourages the idea that everyone has the potential to be an agent of change and transformation.

  The actors, instead of being self-centred, try to promote the creativity of spect-actors, balancing between pushing and listening, challenging and giving up. They show that the world can change but it is not so easy; their role is crucial to empower the audience using a maieutic attitude.

- **The role of the facilitator (Joker)**

  The key character in this process is the facilitator, called Joker, who has the task of creating a safe space for the spect-actors, to stimulate the audience's intervention and creativity, to question each solution coming from the audience. They are not a teacher, a priest, a judge, nor a politician... they are a Socratic person, with a maieutic attitude.

  > This role of the joker is extensively detailed and explained in IO 4 in order to facilitate the implementation of the practical part of the CENV project within the organisations involved in the project.

- **The importance of creating a safe yet challenging space**

  In order to collectively carry out a good and deep research, we need to enhance creativity in the audience of oppressed people, usually pessimists about changes or repeating the same unsuccessful pattern and strategy. Thus the Joker should help create a good group dynamic

where individuals can feel free to express their opinions even if being minority or against the mainstream. The key position for the Joker is not to be objective (impossible), neutral (as if they do not have any values or values have the same weight), but being impartial, that means to allow different analysis and proposals with no censorship.

2.1.3 Its uses

Forum-Theatre is being used around the world as a powerful tool for addressing social issues, promoting dialogue, reflection and change. It enables people to have a critical analysis of power structures, injustices and inequalities in society.

Forum-Theatre explores issues such as harassment, discrimination, gender violence, social oppression, exclusion, racism and many others. The active participation of spectators and the possibility of proposing alternative solutions encourage individual and collective responsibility, as well as the search for fairer and more equitable social transformations.

The goal of Forum-Theatre is sometimes to find a solution to be applied as soon as possible, but this occurs when there is an urgency to act; usually, mainly in Western societies, Forum-Theatre is more useful to train spect-actors to react against oppression and to see, imagine and experiment as many tactics as they can, to be ready to use them when a related situation occurs. The most important is to overcome a tactical approach and to explore strategies, that means to think in a long term way, to imagine steps, to find allies, to create cooperation among similar oppressed people, etc. To achieve this, the Joker has a key role as he/she has to bring people from a naive awareness to a critical one (Paulo Freire, 1973) and also to push spect-actors to think tactically (what should I do here and now) and strategically (how may we overcome this oppression by following a path).

2.1.4 Forum-Theatre and assertive communication

In this project, Forum-Theatre is considered as a specific technique which has its own rules or, its own advices and attention. As this is a very powerful tool that can be adapted to many contexts, we thought to explore its combination with assertive communication, as it is a tool which promotes action, solidarity and problem solving.

Thus the purpose of this project was to research and test to what extent assertive communication could be used to change the oppressive situation that people face in the Forum-Theatre session. In our experience it was a positive discovery and proved to have a great potential, but it is important to underline that Forum-Theatre should lead to the larger social context and not be reduced to a role-play where our aim is to improve some communication skills in the concrete situation.
In other words, people in difficulties on the labour market and with fewer opportunities can benefit from a training in assertive communication alone, of course; the same about Forum-Theatre, but the combination of both has constituted a methodology that allows to go further and deeper in the problems we have detected in relation to labour market, adult education and work prospection.

> In this sense, Forum-Theatre is an exploration that goes beyond interpersonal interaction; it explores the context where the oppressive situation is located and tries to understand the system and not the specific personal behaviour in an isolated view. The idea is that personal behaviour is not only a personal choice or linked to personality, but, as systemic psychology sentences, a result of the social interactions a person can have.

2.1.5 Points raised during the CENV project on the notions of power, inequality and privileges

In other words, the connection between assertive communication and Forum-Theatre can be tricky if the Forum-Theatre is reduced to a role play aiming only to improve communication abilities. This is also related to the analysis of the reasons behind the challenges of people with fewer opportunities. If we think of them as fragile people isolated in the labour market, the only perspective is to strengthen them as individuals for them to compete better for a job against the others. If we think of them as people with less power and resources in the social structure, we can have the opportunity of enabling them to change this structure into a fairer one. Power and power relations are crucial in this last vision.

In the field of labour market, if a person is mistreating or discriminating another one thanks to the power they have, the issue is not communication related but power, inequality and privileges related. Exploiting the workers is not an issue of bad communication, it is exploitation. Authoritarianism is not an issue of bad communication, it is using power "on" someone else, not "with" or "to do…".

Of course there are also problematic situations where communication is the core of the issue, mainly among people with the same power, but there are also situations where this is not true and the problem is the abuse of power.
Therefore we think that Forum-Theatre in the framework of Theatre of the Oppressed is great to widen the vision from micro-situation and individual perception to the wider societal context.

It allows us to analyse in depth the micro-situation, discover the social determinants and the mechanisms of oppression, and finally to create an alternative not as individuals but as people suffering from the same oppression.

Therefore, the connections we see between assertive communication and Forum-Theatre are:

- Good communication can help in a situation of balance of power when the main problem is a misunderstanding.

- Good communication can help to create solidarity among equals, when the problem is fragmentation and isolation.

- Good communication can also help when facing a situation of oppression where the counterpart is more powerful, to clearly express our proposal without triggering a violent reaction. But it is not enough, and there is also the need of something like Forum-Theatre to find a strategy to break down the imbalance of power.

- Forum-Theatre is useful when the issue is an oppression, an imbalance of power, a discrimination, a violence of any kind, as it is a way to understand the problem in depth and to search for strategies and not only for tactics.

Here's a concrete example to illustrate what we mean:

In the common training in Italy, we elaborated a scene in a supermarket where a male client was harassing a female employee. Thanks to a deep analysis we figured out why the person in charge of the supermarket was not so active in make this harassment stop (pressure from his boss, culture of "the client is always right", male chauvinism/sexism by saying that "it was not that bad"…).

In this case the solutions were to find allies in the other workers, to eventually call the trade-union or lawyer, etc. going well over the idea that assertive communication was enough to fix the problem between employee and perpetrator.
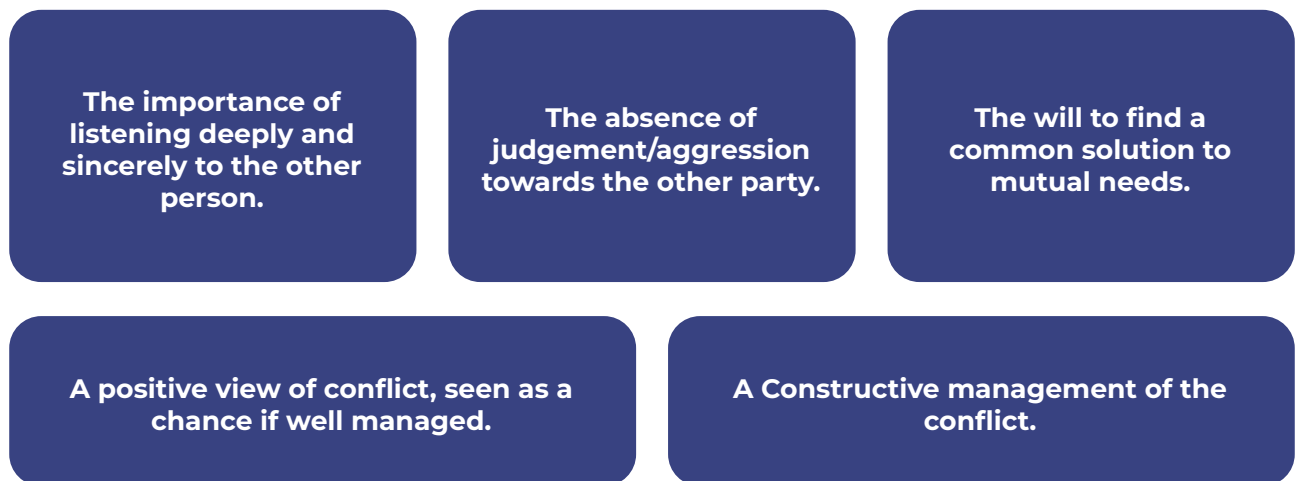
Thus, in the context of using Forum-Theatre and assertive communication, it seems appropriate to deepen the analysis involving the wider context where the facts happen and to create a play consequently.

2.2 Assertive communication and non-violent communication

2.2.1 Gandhi's legacy

Usually, the word "non-violent" suggests a particular use of communication, both oral and non-oral, aiming to reduce violence as much as possible in the interactions between individuals, groups, communities, etc.

It stems from the nonviolent philosophy developed by Gandhi in his struggle against the British Empire. His followers (e.g. Gene Sharp, Johan Galtung) and the movements he inspired around the world have created numerous developments of the basic idea, which is generally underpinned by few common principles:

The importance of listening deeply and sincerely to the other person.	**The absence of judgement/aggression towards the other party.**	**The will to find a common solution to mutual needs.**
A positive view of conflict, seen as a chance if well managed.	**A Constructive management of the conflict.**	

Gandhi inspired a lot of followers to precise what can be non-violent communication.

Here are a few examples:

I**n peace education:** generic communication without violence means being careful with **our words during a conflict to avoid escalation.** Many authors agree that we need to avoid judgments, insults, threats and blackmail, but also the interpretation of other people's feelings or intentions, unsolicited advice and so on.

Many other authors also focus on emotions and needs, suggesting that tackling the root of the conflict rather than discussing ideas helps to find a stable, shared solution.

In the case of a street demonstration or direct action, as well as avoiding physical violence, it is suggested to avoid oral aggression, which can easily trigger a violent reaction; some also suggest trying to communicate personally with the police, bypassing the institutional role, in order to touch the human being behind the uniform. This strategy has been used on several occasions in history, such as in Prague in 1968 against the army of the Soviet Union, in Tienanmen Square against the Chinese army, in the Philippines revolution, etc.

2.2.2 Some examples of more systematic approaches:

◆ Pat Patfoort (1995), a Dutch activist who developed an approach that distinguishes between "P positions" ("I want this", "you want that") and "fundamentals" (the needs, fears and values that underpin these positions). This approach suggests that, in the event of a conflict, both parties should delve deeper into their fundamentals to find a bridge between them, rather than insisting on their positions. This method leads to a solution that can be creative rather than a simple compromise.

◆ Karl Rogers (1980), American psychologist and creator of non-directive psychotherapy, also developed the foundations of Non-Violent Communication (NVC), which was created by his disciples such as Thomas Gordon and Marshall Rosenberg.

◆ The latter is well known throughout the world for his systematisation of an approach known as NVC, giraffe language and empathic communication.

◆ The structure of this communication is set up in 4 essential phases:

Observation: neutral observation of the situation	**Feelings: identify the emotion stimulated by the situation**
Needs: identifying the underlying needs	**Requests: proposed solutions to meet the needs.**

◆ Thomas Gordon (1974) introduced a method called "active listening" and "the no-loser method", which are useful respectively when the problem is mainly other than mine, and when the problem is mainly mine.

◆ Active listening is based on deep listening of other's emotions and mirroring them. The "no-looser method" is a way to manage a conflict taking in account both positions, asking to go from problem to proposal that takes into account also the other's needs.

◆ Jerome Liss (1974), an American psychotherapist, developed an approach called "Caring" and "Constructive Criticism", based on listening deeply to emotions and paying attention to the language used.

◆ The latter is based on 5 steps to guide the person who wants to make a criticism in a way that minimises the risk of escalation or resistance. "Caring" is similar to active listening of Gordon but uses some body language to emphasise emotions in an holistic approach based partially on bioenergetic psychotherapy.

To sum up, we can say that we have used in the CENV project different thoughts from different sources, merging these ideas in what we call "assertive communication", meaning a type of communication based on the ideas listed above.

2.3 The links between emancipation, Forum-Theatre and assertive communication

2.3.1 What is emancipation?

Historically, the concept of "emancipation" has been primarily linked to the act of granting freedom to enslaved people in the United States with the Emancipation Proclamation. Consequently, emancipation can be broadly defined as "the act of freeing or the state of being freed", a state of liberation from a specific control or dependency, whether inhibition or a given convention (Collins dictionary).

In the field of social intervention, the concept of emancipation is linked to the idea of autonomy, independence and the ability to successfully overcome specific situations and obstacles. The concept of empowerment refers to the process of giving or recovering power and status to a person or group of people in a particular situation.

In the context of group work with people who have fewer opportunities, empowerment is a primary objective to be pursued because participants have often been victims of discrimination, stigmatisation, segregation and oppression.

Finally, emancipation also requires the acquisition of knowledge to detect acts of injustice, to analyse the situation and its possible alternatives and to develop a response accordingly. Thus the process of generating knowledge and providing new information should necessarily focus on how these skills and information are embodied and transferred to help to deal with different situations in the future and in personal life.

When working with people with fewer opportunities, the emancipation process is also a process of empowerment highlighting three fundamental phases:

Firstly, a process of introspection is needed to understand and critically examine the social context, its operational factors and the power dynamics that define each person's possibilities, conditions and limits.	**Secondly, it is necessary to provide useful tools and resources and to work on improving the concrete socio-emotional skills that make it possible to detect, denounce and act in situations of injustice where rights are being violated.**	**Finally, it is essential to create and foster a space and conditions that enable participants to develop strategies and ways of changing specific situations and improving their well-being and their lives.**

2.3.2 Theatre of the Oppressed: its potential to enhance emancipation, empowerment and knowledge

Theatre of the Oppressed was conceived and developed by Brazilian director Augusto Boal in the 1960s. The Theatre of the Oppressed methodology is based on Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970), which explores the empowerment of people through a transformational learning process as an alternative to the traditional education system.

The idea of emancipation and empowerment is at the very core of Theatre of the Oppressed, as it focuses on a pro-poor, rights-protective and bottom-up model of democratic engagement for people with fewer resources, fewer opportunities and whose rights are not defended and guaranteed (Malloy, 2015).
The methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed is based on the mobilisation of creative, introspective and theatrical techniques to promote dialogue and social transformation with regard to injustice, oppression and other social problems. Thanks to its methods, Theatre of the Oppressed can be seen as a powerful tool for emancipation and empowerment of its participants (both actors and "spect-actors", as Boal calls them), who play a central role in the use of Theatre of the Oppressed and its techniques (among which Forum-Theatre is one of the most widely used).

In relation to the previously mentioned crucial steps to empowerment, Theatre of the Oppressed can be seen as an empowerment tool as it follows the same logic of encouraging participants to know, talk and act (Osburn, 2010). In practical terms, TO promotes knowledge by giving a perspective on the different contexts, power dynamics and social injustice that lead to oppression, so that people begin to put into words and think critically about their personal situation and condition, and how this can be changed. These two aspects alone do not guarantee the emancipation and empowerment of people, who remain at the observation stage. It is therefore the crucial role of people's action, commitment and mobilisation to seek strategies, explore and test techniques and ideas that enable them to gain valuable first-hand experience that they can use to stand up and defend themselves, or at least to challenge situations of oppression, exploitation and injustice.

The working method and conceptual core of the Theatre of the Oppressed encourage the emancipation of participants through:

◆ The use of a horizontal, bottom-up approach between all the participants involved in the process. The main aim of Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum-Theatre is to stimulate a group of people (whether a community, citizens of the same town or work colleagues) to come together, discuss and reflect on a given theme or situation under conditions of equality. By constantly allowing 'spect-actors' to come on stage and replace the actors as the basis of Forum-Theatre, participants are encouraged to openly share their thoughts and opinions knowing that they will be taken into account in the same way as all the others. The techniques used in Theatre of the Oppressed also allow people to freely experiment, explore and discover their skills and abilities through games and exercises, which builds participants' self-confidence and self-esteem. As Boal himself says, "theatre can help us build our future", rather than wait for it (Boal, 1992). Boal also considers that "we are all actors". This reflects the idea that all individuals can, through theatre, actively claim their role as actors, as subjects of rights, ideas and ways of responding to social situations and injustices in order to build more egalitarian relationships and communities. In this sense, the emancipatory approach of TO is also linked to the idea of the 'democratisation' of global governance and power (Malloy, 2015).

◆ The generation of knowledge through group facilitation and collective critical analysis of social processes and reality. As we saw earlier, emancipation and empowerment are closely linked to the idea of access to knowledge, new information and the ability to overcome complex and difficult situations. Theatre of the Oppressed focuses on the detailed examination of a given situation, in the specific context in which it takes place, and all the factors and power relations that operate within it. By questioning the responsibility of individuals in given contexts as well as social perceptions, Theatre of the Oppressed aims

to promote more collaborative communities where individuals collectively seek common initiatives in regard of equality and justice.

◆ The use of creativity and improvisation to "rehearse reality". Improvisation is a fundamental part of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, as it frees up participants' creative thinking, their ability to seek out new ideas and explore unfamiliar contexts and options. From a broader and longer-term perspective, the use of improvisation allows participants to develop, test and analyse possible alternatives and strategies in a given situation, which trains people's creativity in such a way that in a similar situation in a future real-life context, people tend to rekindle their creativity and look for solutions more quickly and effectively, as they have proved that they were able to do so in the past. Improvisation and other creative techniques therefore promote resilience, a problem-solving attitude and the ability to overcome difficult situations.

◆ The use of theatre as a tool for artistic mediation. The use of art (such as dance, theatre and music) is at the heart of what is known as "artistic mediation": a creative method that uses different artistic techniques to work in complex social contexts and with people with fewer opportunities. For example, social and community theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed give people with fewer opportunities in situations of oppression and injustice, as often reflected in them a more concrete opportunity to express themselves, share their experience and reflect together on ways of transforming it. In addition, arts mediation focuses on people's ability to connect, express and value their emotions in an unique way by engaging and sharing creative processes individually and collectively.

2.3.3 How can the assertive communication contribute to emancipation?

To emancipate ourselves, we have to be prepared to enter into conflict. The non-violent approach to conflict is a real challenge. How can it be managed positively and constructively?

Gandhi and his followers say that when injustice occurs we must open a conflict and not accept or remain silent. At the same time, he chose to consider the other party as an antagonist who must be convinced/forced to change, and not as an enemy to be destroyed.

From this point of view, the non-violent approach is also called assertive behaviour, a balance between not accepting violence and not using it. In this context, the communication we call assertive can be very useful in promoting emancipation, because it provides:

A general and more inclusive approach, which can be used outside the oppressed movement/ group to dialogue with other social groups and find allies, but also within each group or collective to overcome differences in opinions, strategies and behaviours.	Specific tools to manage dialogue with counterparts in sensitive situations, to minimise the risk of a violent reaction.	It is also a daily training for activists and members of oppressed groups in the practice of non-violence in their own lives and thus in the creation of a new world, the world in which we would like to live.

Sources and inspiration for dealing with everyday conflicts.

Opportunities to develop personal and collective skills such as listening, empathy, conflict resolution, assertive behaviour, self-confidence, etc.

Finally, if there is a mismatch between the partners' ways of communicating, they can try to meta-communicate, as described by Watzlawick (1979), i.e. to communicate about communication. If the attempts to "convince" do not succeed, there is the possibility of moving to another level, to force the other party to dialogue, within the framework of an equitable relationship.

2.4 Emotions and Emotional intelligence

2.4.1 What are emotions?

Throughout history, several authors have explored the importance and necessity of emotions in human beings, such as Charles Darwin's pioneering studies on emotional adaptation to Lisa Feldman Barrett's contemporary research on the social construction of emotions. Others, like Golemand and Gardner, have concentrated their efforts in the definition of emotional intelligence among different types of human intelligence and in the description of its characteristics.

One of the first authors to stress the importance of emotional human life and emotions was Charles Darwin. In his book "The Expression of Emotions in Animals and Man" (1872) he stresses the role of emotions in a wider biological and evolutionary theory, while giving little space to cultural factors. Taking their origin in animal behaviour, emotions played a crucial role in the adaptation and survival of species: their function is to help us to react quickly to threatening or favourable situations, thereby facilitating our survival and reproduction. Accordingly, he identifies six principal emotional states: happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise and disgust.

If in Darwin's point of view emotions' origin comes from very strong and primitive impulses to act, helping our ancestors to survive in a wild environment for millions of years, other theories stress the role of emotions in human life considering them in a complex interrelation with our rationality. At the end of the last century, for example, Antonio Damasio wrote his book "Descartes' error: Emotion, reason and human brain" (1994) in which he argues that emotions are fundamental to rational and adaptive decision-making, as they provide us with an internal signal of appreciation of our options, which guides us towards choices that are beneficial to our survival and well-being.

More recently, researchers like the psychologist and neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barret introduced a constructivist point of view over emotions conducting research into the social construction of emotions. In her book "How Emotions Are Made" (2017), Barrett argues that emotions are not universal settled entities, but are social and cultural constructs. She argues that our experiences, learning and social contexts influence how we perceive, label and experience emotions.

2.4.2 The importance of emotional expression

Emotions affect our well-being and mental health. The work of Sigmund Freud emphasised the importance of repressed emotions in the psychological life of human beings. Throughout his career, and particularly in his theory of the drive, Freud argued that repressed emotions, such as fear, anger or sexual desire, can manifest themselves indirectly through physical or psychological symptoms. Freud argued that the correct release and expression of these repressed emotions was necessary for good mental health.

Emotional expression is thus essential to our well-being: it can be defined as the ability to communicate our emotions appropriately and effectively. Expressing our emotions in an appropriate way is essential for maintaining solid interpersonal relationships and promoting emotional well-being. Some points are important for emotional expression:

authenticity, i.e. the capacity to express emotions honestly and without repressing or exaggerating them.	clarity, as expressing our emotions clearly and respectfully helps avoiding misunderstandings and conflicts.	active listening: being able to listen to and understand the emotions of others.

emotional control: learning how to cope with the intensity of our expression and to express them avoiding impulsive or destructive responses. Emotional control enables us to express ourselves constructively and to find appropriate solutions to the challenges we face.

2.4.3 Classification of emotions

Among many models and classification, the one proposed by Plutchik (1984) is one of the most accurate and has triggered the attention of the CENV partners. For some it was a discovery. His theory is based on a psycho-evolutionary approach, and describes emotions in terms of their adaptive functions. Emotions are thus one of the basis of human behaviour and trigger different responses to the challenges and stimulus coming from the external environment: for example the response to fear can be fighting or escaping.

Plutchik describes 8 primary emotions at the basis of human emotional experience; they are organised in couples of opposite emotions and combine to form secondary and tertiary emotions. Their intensity can vary, for example from apprehension to fear to terror, triggering different kinds of behavioural response. Emotions are represented in the so called Plutchik wheel of emotions, that is arranged in the shape of a circle, with opposing emotions placed in opposite positions on the circle - for example love and anger are opposing each other. In the spaces between the primary ones there are secondary and tertiary emotions, outcome of their combination. It is an instrument widely used when dealing with emotions since it resumes and offers a visual way of the basic emotions, their intensity, their combination, emotional contrasts. In this way, the Plutchik wheel represents, in 48 emotions, a particularly complete range of what each of us may feel at one time or another in our lives.

The 8 primary emotions:

- **Joy:** a positive emotion associated with happiness, contentment and satisfaction.
- **Confidence/Trust:** an emotion linked to security, calm and tranquillity.
- **Fear:** an emotion triggered by the perception of a threat or danger. It is associated with anxiety, nervousness and insecurity.
- **Surprise:** this emotion is felt when we discover something unexpected or unknown. It is associated with disbelief and intense attention.
- **Sadness:** an emotion associated with loss, melancholy and despair.
- **Disgust:** this emotion is linked to the aversion and rejection of something unpleasant. It is associated with disgust and repulsion.
- **Anger:** this is an intense emotion linked to frustration and aggression.
- **Anticipation:** this is an emotion that arises when we look forward to something with enthusiasm or nervousness. It is associated with waiting and preparation.
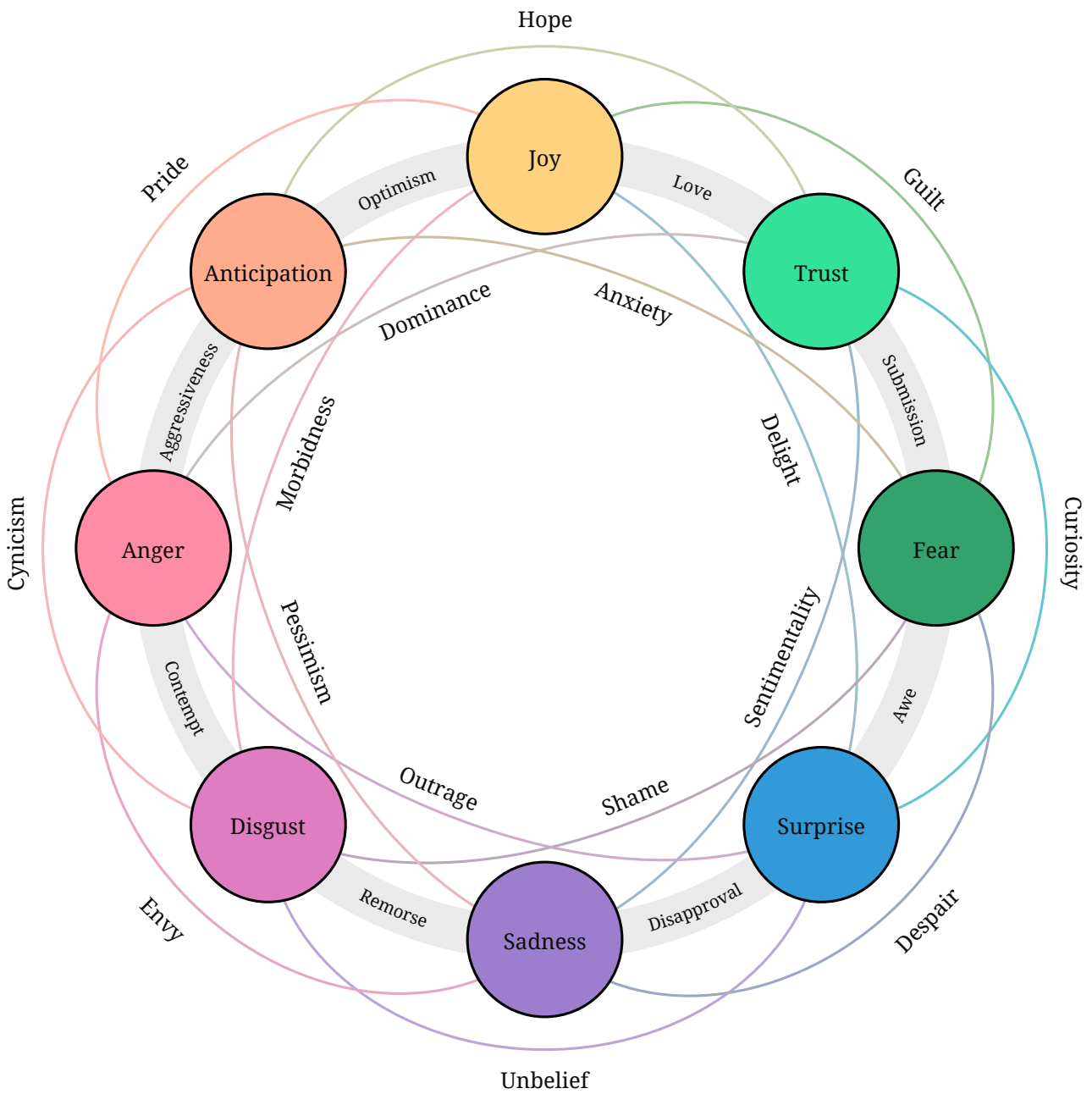
Plutchik's Emotion Dyads

Image source: www.simonwhatley.co.uk/writing/plutchik-wheel-of-emotion

2.4.4 The function of emotions and the importance of emotional intelligence

Beyond being simple biological responses, emotions fulfil a range of essential functions in our lives, enabling us to adapt and interact efficiently to our environment.
Emotions are internal signals, so called emotional responses telling us how we feel and how we interpret situations around us. They enable us to quickly assess whether something is beneficial or threatening, pleasant or unpleasant. The human brain developed a wide range of emotional reactions that can be activated in different situations and guide our behaviour accordingly. Thus, they play a main role in decision-making. Some research has shown that emotions influence our preferences and cognitive biases, which has a significant impact on our choices and actions. For example, in front of a bold option, a positive emotion may lead us to choose it, while a negative emotion may lead us to opt for a more conservative solution.

Emotions also play a main role in regulating mood and emotional well-being. They help to release accumulated tension and energy, providing much-needed emotional relief. Unpleasant emotions, such as sadness or anger, can prompt us to seek changes or solutions to problematic situations. On the other hand, pleasant emotions, such as joy or love, give us a feeling of well-being and satisfaction.

Emotions influence social interactions. Emotions enable us to understand the emotional signals of others, which facilitates empathy and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the appropriate communication of emotions helps us to establish and maintain healthy relationships, strengthening emotional bonds and promoting greater mutual understanding.

How do emotions interact with rationality and all the other factors, aspects and personal priorities that influence daily life?

As psychologists and neuroscientists have shown, the human brain is made up of a rational part and an emotional part. While the former is more recent in the history of evolution and has enabled our species to develop and distinguish itself from animals, the latter has more ancient origins. The emotional brain interacts with our rational part, guiding and in a way allowing the rational part to express its potential: these two parts are complementary, and the way in which they work together determines our behaviour.

Beyond the dualism between emotions and rationality, in his book Frames of Mind, the American psychologist Howard Gardner (1983) developed the theory of multiple intelligences. He distinguished different types of human talent and defined a set of 7 basic intelligences. In addition to the two purely rational logical-mathematical intelligence and linguistic-oral intelligence, he identified musical intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence, while naturalistic and existential intelligence were added later. Intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence are for Gardner the two sides of a personal intelligence based on the understanding of emotions: on the one side the introspective ability to understand and control our own emotions, strengths, weaknesses and reactions; on the other, the attitude of understanding the emotions and motivations of others, the ability to cooperate, which fundamentally determines our social skills.

This emphasis placed on the link between emotions and intelligence has brought psychologists to the concept of emotional intelligence (Salovey and Mayer,1990; Goleman,1995) which brings together the personal and social skills of the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, and considers all the positive outputs for our life associated with it. Self-awareness, defined as the capacity to recognise, understand and manage one's own emotions, is the key personal competence that is fundamental to manage one's own life and develop emotional intelligence.

Goleman (1995) describes four fundamental spheres of emotional intelligence:

◆ emotional control, as self-awareness fosters emotional control and self-management, that involve being able to control one's emotions and reactions, avoiding impulsive and destructive behaviour.

◆ motivation, implying self-motivation, perseverance and optimism.

◆ empathy, as the deeper the understanding of our own emotions, the more we will be able to understand others' ones and their point of view. Empathy is essential for building healthy and fulfilling relationships, enabling us to establish deeper bonds with others and encourage open and honest communication.

◆ relationship management, as empathy and self-awareness will facilitate interactions in our private and professional relationships, and our ability to understand social situations. This social intelligence fosters the ability to organise groups, negotiate solutions, create and manage personal relationships (Goleman 1995).

Emotional intelligence and self-awareness improve personal well-being. People with well-developed emotional capacities are more inclined to be effective, have a better quality of life, and optimise learning and success at school or at work. For example, Goleman (1995) observes that emotional intelligence enables people with average skills and IQ to achieve better results than those with a very high IQ but little emotional intelligence. He says: "At best, IQ appears to contribute to only 20% of the determinants of success."

💬 **Comments:**
In the light of the above information and in relation to the CENV project, it seems important to stress that entrepreneurship and career management cannot be dissociated from psychological well-being. Emotional intelligence is a key factor in determining how people develop their talents. On the one hand, self-awareness and emotional intelligence help to make the right decisions, maintain motivation and optimism and cope with disappointment; on the other, they help to maintain good relationships, understand others, cooperate and find common solutions. In professional life, technical skills and abilities are not enough if they are not supported by emotional intelligence.

2.5 Upholding assertive behaviour

Assertive behaviour (T.A. Harris,1987) is not just the ability to say no, or to respond primarily to one's own needs. Assertive behaviour is a type of respectful attitude toward oneself and others, manifested in behaviour, emotions and knowledge/concepts. One of the first to invoke the concept of assertive behaviour was Fritz Pearls, a German-born psychiatrist and creator of gestalt therapy. As he persuades, regarding assertive behaviour: "Express yourself - don't manipulate, explain, justify or judge. Surrender to experiencing unpleasantness and pain, just as you surrender to experiencing pleasure. Don't limit your consciousness. Do not accept any "should" except what is truly yours. Take full responsibility for your actions, feelings and thoughts."

Nowadays, when thinking about assertive behaviour training or workshops, we much more often refer to the concept of Eric Berne. Berne, the creator of the so-called transactional analysis, distinguishes three ego states. Every person is made up of 3 ego states: Parent, Adult, Child. These are 3 sides of the personality that we use without necessarily realising it when we interact with others and in everyday social situations. Depending on the individual, certain ego states can be hyperactive or "dormant" and work to their disadvantage in everyday life (therapies are then possible).

Thus, for example, if someone is dominated by the childish Self, this person may become offended or withdrawn like a small child when he or she comes into conflict. A person in whom the parental Self is dominant may be overprotective or overly critical of others, like a parent trying to raise their own child. The adult self most often makes decisions rationally, consistently and responsibly, and it is this state that should dominate in a healthy adult.

The degree of development of each state depends on our attitude towards ourselves and others. Eric Berne distinguishes four possible types of attitudes which are explained in IO3. **The inherent components of assertive behaviour are respect, empathy and acceptance of people's differences.**

> 💬 *Comments:*
> *During the pilot workshops, working on assertive behaviours in the context of professional life enabled participants to develop various skills related to assertive behaviour: practising expressing (and accepting) needs, requests and expectations, refusing (and accepting refusals), expressing (and accepting) anger and other difficult emotions, giving and accepting feedback, accepting criticism, expressing and accepting praise or opinions, and arguing for one's own reasons or ideas - without violating the boundaries of others.*

III) LAUNCH STAGES AND PREREQUISITES

3.1 Skills and abilities required for module facilitators

Skills linked to the social and training sectors are a prerequisite for taking up the training module created in the CENV project and implementing it in its organisation.

Professionals must master the activity of support, which is a key skill in both sectors, as well as the ability to design, prepare and run training courses or collective actions.

In the various CENV project guides, professionals are referred to as "trainers", "coaches" and "facilitators". These words are used in the same way as training. The professional follows a set of techniques and methodological practices before, during and after the training session to ensure that knowledge and skills are passed on, or in more practical terms, to achieve the training objective. Leading a training course is an exercise that requires skills and the art of motivating, managing and leading learners towards the educational objective designed by the trainer.

The skills required to run the " Communication upskilling for people with fewer opportunities, based on Forum-Theatre and assertive communication methods" training course are:

Ability to listen	A flair for teamwork	Supporting and leading the implementation of a collective intervention by encouraging people to participate
An interest in social issues and people's needs	Knowledge on professional and non-violent communication	
A taste for communication and human relations	Mobilising people's resources	Establishing a professional relationship within an ethical framework

In addition to these skills, an interest in innovative teaching tools related to non-formal adult education and Forum-Theatre is essential. The trainer will take on the role of the Joker, which is described in detail in IO4.

3.2 Advices and warnings before committing to the process

3.2.1 Particular considerations when working with emotions

One of the aims of the CENV project is to provide participants with the tools and support they need to improve their emotional intelligence and enhance their personal and social skills. Facilitators must therefore demonstrate specific skills and attitudes in the following areas:

◆ Sensitivity and empathy: the facilitator conveys the message that emotions are subjective and personal experiences. They foster an environment of acceptance and support so that participants feel comfortable exploring and expressing their emotions. This is why it is very important that the facilitator first respects and values the diversity of emotions that participants may feel, so that this attitude is shared by all participants.

◆ Emotional self-awareness: The facilitator should propose activities and exercises that enable participants to explore and identify their emotions in a precise and authentic way. This may involve introspective exercises, simple guided mindfulness practices or focusing on expressing and exposing their emotions during the logbook activity.

◆ Identifying other people's emotions: The facilitator should encourage every opportunity in class to practise observing and recognising facial expressions, body language and non-oral cues that indicate emotional states. This will be very useful when role-playing.

◆ Effective emotional communication: during assertive communication practices, the facilitator should have the opportunity to go into this in greater depth, but from the outset, he or she can teach participants how to communicate their emotions effectively and respectfully. They encourage the use of "I" instead of "you" when expressing emotions, avoiding blaming or judging others. It also encourages the use of clear assertive words to express needs and desires related to emotions.

◆ Safe and supportive environment: The facilitator should strive to create a safe environment in which participants feel comfortable expressing and sharing their emotions.

◆ Adaptability: as far as possible, the facilitator should adjust the activities and approaches according to the individual needs and abilities of the group. They take account of conceptual limitations (even physical limitations, where appropriate) to adapt activities and sometimes invent new ones.

◆ Practical and applied approach: The facilitator should show participants all the tools and strategies they can apply in their daily lives to improve their emotional skills and general well-being.

💬 **Comments:**
The experiences of the CENV project allow us to state that the architecture of the module and its content will help participants to develop positive thinking and abilities to overcome emotional and professional obstacles. However, we encourage the facilitator to support this process by stressing the importance of personal development and perseverance in order to achieve this (possible personal steps after the training to develop resilience and motivation, for example).

3.2.2 Particular considerations when using assertive communication and non-violent communication

Trying to change the way adults communicate calls for particular sensitivity and flexibility, as it involves deconstructing a large part of their social learning linked to language. The module facilitator must be aware that participants will make mistakes, that they will feel frustrated and that for many, especially at the beginning, it will seem really difficult to adopt this new way of communicating. During the project pilots, for example, many participants found it difficult to remember the NVC steps or to link them together, or to listen and analyse without judging.

Here are some attitudes and postures that may be useful for the training module facilitator to adopt:

Active listening and mindfulness during communicative interactions. The trainer encourages participants to pay full attention to the words, gestures and emotions of others. The trainer himself explains and uses active listening techniques, such as repetition, paraphrasing and emotional validation, to demonstrate genuine understanding.

To promote empathy as a central element of assertive and non-violent communication. The facilitator helps participants to understand and adapt to the emotions and needs of others. They encourage the practice of putting oneself in another person's shoes and taking into account their perspectives and experiences.

Avoid judgement and criticism during communication. The facilitator puts this point into practice and encourages participants to express their observations and feelings without blaming or attacking others. They encourage objective observation and the expression of clear needs and requests.

Use constructive and rewarding language in interactions. The facilitator helps participants to express their thoughts and emotions clearly and confidently, avoiding words or phrases that could be perceived as offensive or provocative.

Resolving conflicts constructively, without one of the protagonists feeling aggrieved or losing out. The facilitator encourages participants to find solutions based on the needs of all parties concerned.

Practice and feedback: the module leader provides regular opportunities to practise empathic and non-violent communication. Practical theatre and role-playing exercises enable participants to put the skills they have learned into practice.

Simplify and reinforce the 4 stages of NVC: as mentioned above, participants may find it difficult to remember or make the link with the 4 stages of NVC. The facilitator should simplify the explanation and reinforce understanding by providing clear, practical examples so that participants can visualise how the steps are applied in concrete situations. The more examples and practical exercises there are, the easier it will be to integrate the 4 steps. However, the facilitator must.

Encourage progressive integration by starting to focus on one step at a time and proposing specific exercises (see OI 3), specific practice and feedback before moving on to the next step. As participants gain confidence and skills in one step, they will be able to move on to the next.

Encourage self-compassion and patience as it is normal to make mistakes and face challenges at the beginning. The facilitator encourages participants to continue practising and to celebrate the small victories on the way to more effective non-violent communication.

3.2.3 Particular considerations when working with Forum-Theatre

◆ It is very important that the performance space creates a safe environment. It is the environment in which theatrical activities take place. This space must be safe and give participants confidence so they feel free to express themselves and explore without fear of being judged, and thus feel comfortable taking risks, experimenting and sharing their personal experiences.

◆ The facilitator should therefore establish an environment in which mutual respect, attentive listening and emotional support are encouraged.

◆ The practice space also needs to be physically safe, with enough room for participants' mobility and attention to safety during scene improvisation.

◆ It is important to take into account the emotional sensitivity of the participants. Forum-Theatre and related activities can arouse intense emotions that can be difficult to manage. For this reason, it is necessary to offer an appropriate space for processing emotions and provide tools enabling to deal with emotionally intense situations in a constructive way.

The facilitator can use improvisation techniques and role-playing to help participants get in touch with their feelings and encourage them to express themselves safely. The facilitator fosters a space of emotional openness where participants feel free to express and process their emotions without fear of being judged. In this sense, it is important to dwell on one of the main ideas underlying the different approaches to NVC: "observing without judging". This fosters empathy among participants, encouraging them to put themselves in the shoes of the other characters and understand their emotions. It also emphasises the importance of active listening, by offering participants a space to listen to and validate the emotions of others.

Finally, the facilitator is encouraged to offer participants practical tools for managing their emotions during and after the theatrical performances, simple guided breathing or relaxation techniques that help them to regulate their emotional state, for example.

💬 *Comments:*
Following the experiences of the CENV project and the learning week in Trento, all the partners suggest the presence of a second person in addition to the facilitator/trainer in case if one of the participants suffers an emotional breakdown, to provide support without jeopardising the management of the group.

◆ It is essential to pay attention to the quality of the facilitation to create a functional and lasting group dynamic.

To ensure equal participation from all participants, it is necessary to create a participative, inclusive and respectful learning environment, which contributes to a more enriching and meaningful experience for participants. All participants should feel valued and appreciated. The facilitator should therefore allow equal participation and ensure that all voices are taken into account during discussions and reflections. Some members of the group may be shyer, while others may be more dominant. The facilitator therefore takes care to balance participation, encouraging the quieter members to express themselves and moderating the more extroverted ones to ensure an equal distribution of time and attention.

As the dynamics of the group evolve, it may be necessary to adjust the plans and structure of the session. The facilitator/Joker must be flexible and adaptable. He/she observes the needs and interactions of the group and makes the necessary changes to enrich the experience.

💬 *Comments:*

It is necessary to create an encouraging space where participants can question themselves.

As explained above, creating a safe space where people can trust each other is essential to enable individuals to open up and build links between each other, generating a group feeling which, in a virtuous circle, reinforces trust.

At the same time, we have to bear in mind that if participants stay in their comfort zone all the time, they won't learn anything meaningful. This is why with the CENV approach, it is strongly recommended to strike a balance between safety and challenge, paying attention to the group and the people in it, in order to offer a stimulating experience. It's up to the facilitator as Joker to decide when and how to leave the "comfort zone" and for how long. This requires sensitivity and listening skills, as well as the tools to provoke the challenge.

3.3 Recommendations to set up a workshop:

3.3.1 Advices to create a safe space

To create a "safe space" where participants feel that their ideas are welcome and listened to, without judgement, the facilitator should:

◆ propose activities that encourage team-building and, why not, suggest that the group agree on ground rules to be respected during the course of the training (see 0I 3 and OI 1).

◆ guide the participants in a process of self-awareness: What are my beliefs? What are my prejudices? What do I like and dislike about where I live? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living where I do? How do I connect with the other environment - the one where I don't live?

◆ create a dialogue between participants living in different contexts so that they can learn more about the "opposite" reality.

3.3.2 Starting and closing rituals to begin and end each session

Rituals are important for the group dynamic. Rituals enable participants to:

◆ Share a common moment

◆ Create complicity and group cohesion

◆ Give meaning to the group

◆ Indicate changes of space and/or pace in daily routines

◆ Create a specific atmosphere to begin and/or end specific activities

◆ Help participants to "be present" (be aware and attentive to what is happening at the precise moment)

◆ Put participants at ease

◆ Contribute to create a climate of safety.

> **A ritual during a session should be a short routine that has been agreed with the group beforehand. To make the best use of time, the opening ritual should last no more than 5 minutes and the closing ritual no more than 2 minutes.**

3.3.2.1 Some ideas of rituals to start the workshop sessions:

◆ Listening to a song: it can always be the same song or each day a different participant can bring a song for the others to listen to. The song can be accompanied by dancing, free movement and/or stretching to warm up the participants.

◆ Self-massage: standing in a circle with relaxing instrumental music playing in the background, the facilitator asks participants to breathe consciously and massage themselves, starting with the feet and ending with the face.

◆ One-word circle: with all the participants placed in a circle, the facilitator asks each of them to say one word to express how they are feeling (it doesn't have to be a feeling, but any word that expresses the essence of what they are feeling at that specific moment). As a general rule, the words "good", "bad", "ok", "fine", etc. should not be used.

◆ Energy thermometer: on an imaginary line drawn on the floor, one side of which is without energy and the other full of energy, participants are asked to place themselves on the line at the point that corresponds to their energy level at the time. The facilitator will take their energy level into account when trying to get them to participate in the training session.

3.3.2.2 Some ideas of rituals to close the workshop sessions:

◆ Repeat the one-word circle and energy thermometer at the end of the session.

◆ Create a rallying cry for the group (a short catchphrase) and, in a circle, all shout the rallying cry together at the end.

> 💬 **Comments:**
> *Whatever rituals are chosen, it is important that:*
> ◆ *The facilitator takes an active part in the ritual.*
> ◆ *The facilitator ensures consistency by allowing enough time to start and finish each session with the chosen rituals.*

3.3.3 Icebreaker and energiser activities for the start of each session (if necessary)

After the opening ritual, it's a good idea to propose an ice-breaker activity. The facilitator can decide to use icebreakers or energisers whenever he or she feels it is useful to increase or revive the group's energy. Icebreakers and energisers are suggested in IO 3.

3.3.4 Brainstorming circle at the end of each exercise

To end an exercise the facilitator asks participants to sit or stand in a circle and asks questions such as:

◆ What was difficult

◆ What was easy

◆ What they enjoyed

◆ If something has made them angry or uncomfortable

◆ If they have achieved something new

◆ Whether they have changed their perception in any way, etc.

> 💬 **Comment:**
> *Reflection activities can be varied; in our project, keeping the collective guided logbook helped a great deal in this respect, as did the advice on carrying out the activities proposed in the module (educational content of the module in OI3).*

CONCLUSION

We hope that this guide stimulated the curiosity and desire of professionals to take up the approach proposed by the CENV project and deliver the "Communication upskilling for people with fewer opportunities, based on Forum-Theatre and assertive communication methods" module within their organisation.

It is strongly recommended that this guide be read in conjunction with the three other intellectual tools proposed, which provide practical tools to implement the module.

We are aware of the breadth and number of topics covered and of the ambition of such training, which aims to empower people with fewer opportunities. But the meeting of the different European organisations in the CENV partnership and their specific professionals and fields of intervention have encouraged rich exchanges and reflection on several aspects about the professional integration of the public and, more broadly, about individuals in their essence.

We are convinced of the benefits of an introduction to assertive communication and Forum-Theatre for our target audiences. We have a few concrete examples of 'metamorphosis' or 'communication success' from our pilot projects.

- **At the Comptoir Des Colibris, following** the second test phase, a person who was receiving support for integration and who was taking the training went on a work placement in the restaurant trade. During the course evaluation interview, she said that the introduction to assertive communication had enabled her to manage her emotions better during exchanges and to react better to different situations where she normally would have lost her temper and would have probably abandoned the course. She said that she had been able to receive other people's words and emotions without taking them personally, i.e. with detachment, without feeding the enemy image ("it doesn't belong to me"). She explained that she had no difficulty in accepting the existence of two realities side by side and that she had been able to say "stop" to aggressive comments without raising the tone or the pressure, and that she had "surprised" herself.

- **At STOP-KLATKA**, in the first testing group one participant highlighted that the sessions gave her another point of view on how she perceives her work situation. She is not sure yet what strategies she will try out in her work life, however she felt much more empowered to start to think about to step out her 'communication routine".

- **At FUTURA GESTIONA**, two anecdotes surprised the trainers: a student who was depressed had not left her home for 2 years. Thanks to her participation in the CENV module, she started walking on the beach and wrote her CV to start looking for a job. One student left her partner during the course because she realised that he was not treating her well and that she needed to be treated better. The journey of the rest of the participants was equally fascinating.

Comments:
We believe that non-violent and assertive communication are challenges as human beings in this century, but it can be a useful and stimulating way of changing this world for the better by avoiding violence and its consequences as much as possible. This approach should be disseminated and used by all movements determined to fight for their rights, to empower them and to avoid the spiral of injustice-violence-repression... At the same time, we must be careful not to transform assertive communication into a peaceful, smiling way of accepting violence and injustice.

Our module enables participants to work on self-knowledge and self-confidence, as well as acquiring techniques and postures that promote assertive communication. At the same time, Forum- Theatre is very useful for helping people in vulnerable situations to deal with their problems by:

Considering that a personal weakness is a social problem, which strengthens solidarity rather than individualism.

Proposing strategic thinking rather than a quick response as a sudden reaction to the situation.

By opening up the possibility of considering numerous alternatives and freeing the imagination.

By giving people the opportunity to try out their own ideas in practice, to see the results and to listen to the public's comments.

By being open to analysing the wider context in which the difficulties arise and understanding the vicious circles, the different roles and responsibilities, and the power structure in the specific situation.

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