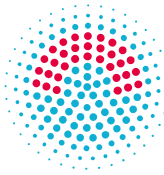


# Creating Learning Communities

## An international Training of Trainers course for the promotion of death literacy in three different countries



8th Public Health Palliative Care  
International Conference  
brücken bauen  
bâtir des ponts  
building bridges

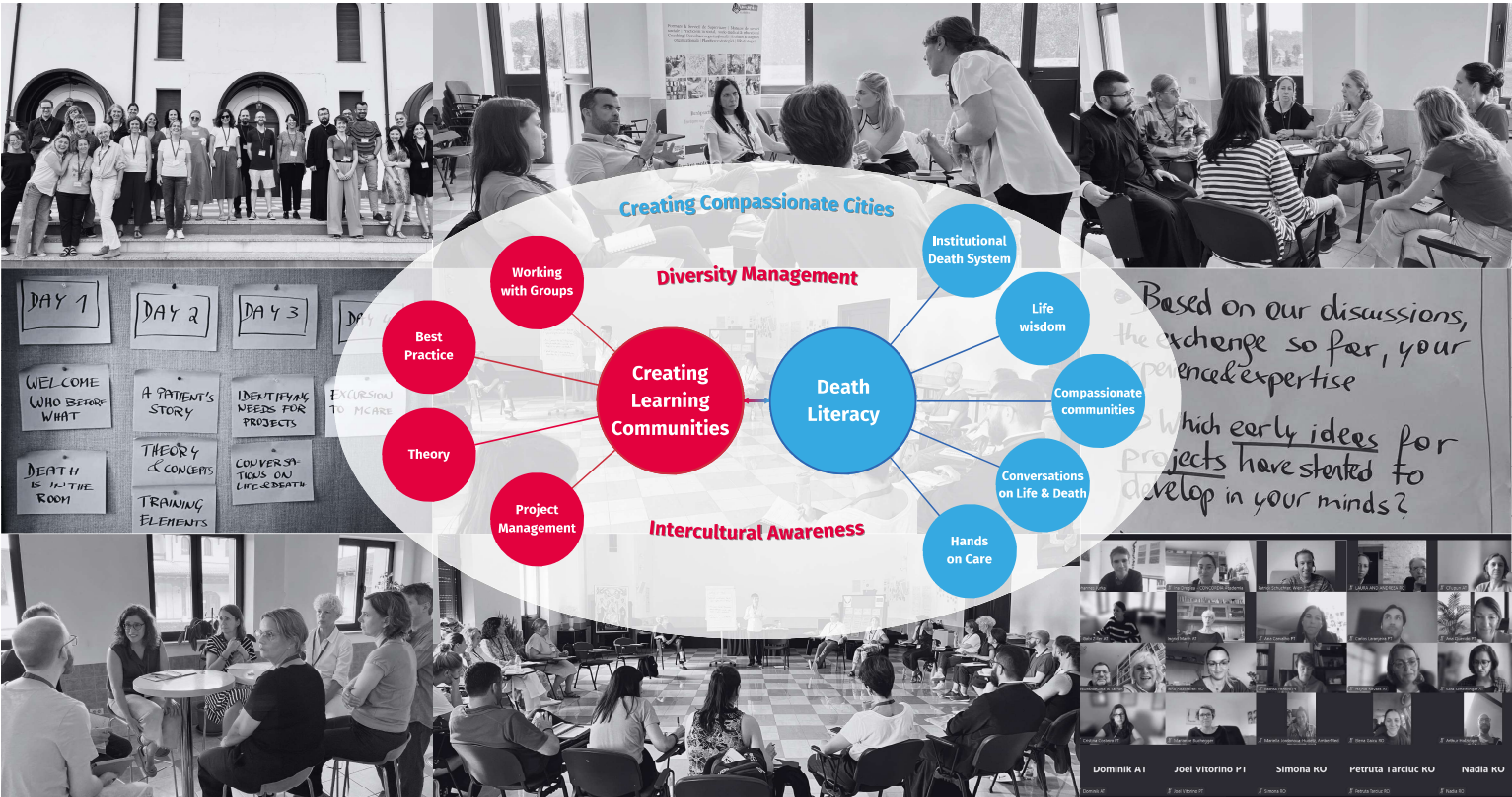
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### Introduction

We have developed an international train-the-trainer course aimed at fostering death literacy across three European countries. The participants, experienced professionals from the field of palliative care, represent Romania, Portugal, and Austria (seven from each country). The overarching goal of this course, as part of a larger collaborative initiative, is to create innovative educational frameworks that promote a culture of palliative care across various societal contexts. These efforts align with the core principles of "death literacy" (DL) and the Compassionate Cities concept. The intercultural learning exchange, occurring both at the individual participant level and the institutional collaboration level, is of critical importance to the success of this project.

### Methods, Process, and Design

The curriculum development is structured around the core dimensions of DL and emphasizes the creation of cohesive learning communities (see Fig. 1). The course consists of three in-person modules, each lasting four days, held in Bucharest, Vienna, and Leiria, as well as two online modules. These online modules include project coaching sessions and 'virtual excursions' to best practice projects. Participants also utilize learning diaries, develop 'growing project sketches,' and engage in knowledge sharing through designated learning platforms. To date, the first in-person module has been successfully conducted in Bucharest, along with one online module. The participants' projects are in the early stages of planning and are now entering concrete phases of implementation. The project will have a time frame between Jan. 2024 and Dec. 2025.



### Interim Results: Participant Projects

**Portugal:** A joint project with shared responsibilities has been established between Polytechnic University of Leiria and Leiria Compassionate City. This collaboration focuses on three target groups: nursing students, healthcare professionals, and the broader community. The project aims to develop competencies at three levels - cognitive, affective, and functional - through a variety of interventions, including Last Aid courses, the ABCDs of Dignity in care, compassionate self-care education, Death Cafés, and the implementation of "Before I Die" walls.

**Romania:** The Romanian initiative comprises three key components: (1) a blended experiential training program for professionals in the socio-medical field, complemented by work sessions and individual study; (2) a blended training program for caregivers, volunteers, and family members; and (3) an online compassionate community, coordinated by CONCORDIA Academia, will be built to support caregivers. This project also aims to initiate discussions around the concept of compassionate communities in Romania.

**Austria:** Austria's contribution includes four sub-projects: (1) the development of death literacy within the refugee and migrant community, specifically targeting the Somali and Chinese populations, using peer-learning methods; (2) bottom-up conversations on end-of-life issues in two districts of Vienna; (3) awareness-raising initiatives for stakeholders focused on homelessness and uninsured populations; and (4) a neighborhood-based project connecting a hospice with a school for students with special needs.

### Interim conclusions: Important learnings

The distinct histories, healthcare systems, and cultural attitudes towards death in each country shape the focus of individual projects, contributing to a rich and multifaceted learning experience within the group.

Engaging in open and shared existential reflection on personal experiences of loss and death serves as a cornerstone for all palliative care learning processes.

The concept of social learning has expanded beyond traditional classroom and workshop settings to encompass community engagement, public awareness, and personal existential reflection.

"Helicopter rounds," wherein participants observe the group process from a higher-level perspective, have proven to be particularly valuable for group learning.

While the dimensions of the Death Literacy Index provided an initial framework, adaptations were necessary to create a coherent curriculum that aligns with the specific needs of each country.

A "sense of citizenship" was introduced as an additional learning dimension, alongside "information", "skills" and "personal virtues", to better address social and political considerations in all learning units.

Participants are actively encouraged to take ownership of their learning processes by designing and conducting their own training sequences. This approach aligns with the philosophy of Compassionate Communities, which emphasizes the responsibility of each individual to contribute to the well-being of their community.