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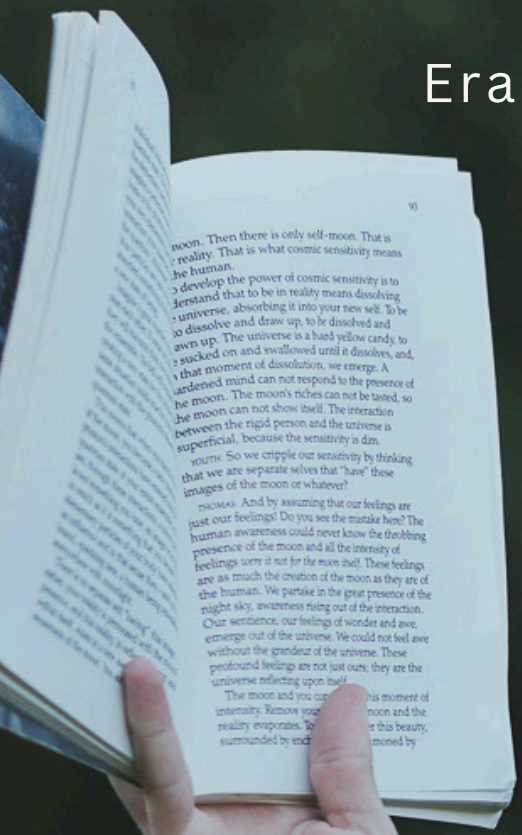
# Stories

## of the Earth and Body

Erasmus+ youth exchange

7. - 15. July 2025

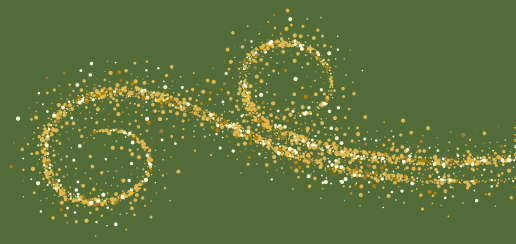
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*This training course was funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, supporting international cooperation, non-formal education, and the development of skills for personal and professional growth.*

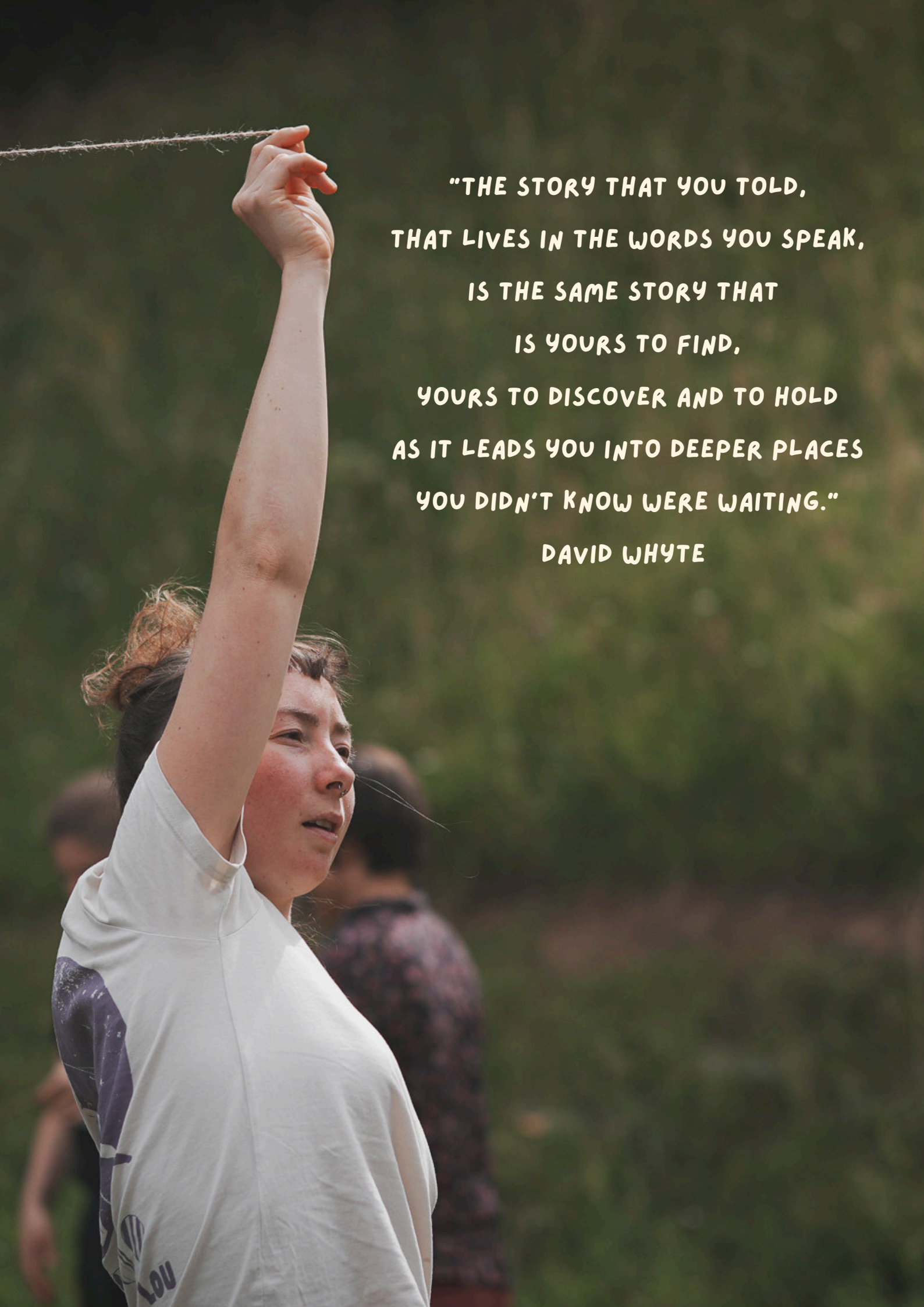
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# ABOUT

It was an 8-day Youth Exchange that explored deep listening and authentic communication through the wisdom of the body, the Earth, and artistic expression. We engaged in the language of the body, movement, and creative practices to express our truths with vulnerability and presence. By connecting with our personal narratives through body and art, we explored emotional awareness and built meaningful connections with others. This project aimed to create a supportive space for self-discovery, creativity, and a deeper sense of belonging.




"THE STORY THAT YOU TOLD,
THAT LIVES IN THE WORDS YOU SPEAK,
IS THE SAME STORY THAT
IS YOURS TO FIND,
YOURS TO DISCOVER AND TO HOLD
AS IT LEADS YOU INTO DEEPER PLACES
YOU DIDN'T KNOW WERE WAITING."
DAVID WHYTE

# GUIDING QUESTIONS

*How do I live with more courage and self-support to express my truth?*

*How can I listen more deeply to my body and the Earth to guide my authentic expression?*

*What holds me back from speaking my truth, and how can I move beyond these barriers?*

*How can I share my stories in creative yet clear ways that feel true to me?*

*How can movement, somatics, and nature-based practices support my communication and self-expression?*

*What role does storytelling play in personal and collective healing and empowerment?*

# WHY THIS TOPIC

In this Erasmus+ Youth Exchange, we worked with questions and storytelling as a way to support learning through experience, reflection, and sharing. Instead of giving answers, we invited young people to explore their own stories, beliefs, and feelings, and to see how these shape the way they communicate and connect with others. This approach follows non-formal education, where learning comes from doing, reflecting, and learning from each other.



Storytelling was used as a practical tool in youth work to help participants express themselves and feel heard in a safe group environment. By sharing personal experiences, young people could better understand themselves and also build empathy and connection with others in the group. The questions helped guide this process, making it easier to reflect on topics like self-expression, fears, and communication.

# WHY THIS TOPIC

We also included body-based and creative methods, which made the process more accessible for everyone, especially for those who find it hard to express themselves only with words. This supported different ways of learning and helped participants connect more deeply with their experiences.



STORIES ARE MORE THAN WORDS THEY ARE LIVING EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPE HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND THE WORLD.



# FLOW OF THE WEEK

Flow of the week was intentional and follows principles of non-formal education and youth work. Starting with the body and simple presence created safety and accessibility for everyone. Building gradually into trust and relational work allowed deeper vulnerability and openness. Ending with creative expression and reflection supported integration of learning on a personal and group level. The process respected different learning styles and emotional rhythms, making space for both individual exploration and collective experience. Overall, it created a learning journey where participants could move from “I am”, to “I am with others”, to “we create together.”

At the beginning of the week, the focus was on grounding in the body and arriving in the space. We used simple exercises such as guided meditations, movement explorations with gravity, walking practices, and name work. For example, participants explored how it feels to move from lying on the floor to standing, how their feet relate to the ground, and how they inhabit space. Exercises like whispering and sharing one’s name with the group helped bring awareness to identity and presence, while early partner dialogues using limited words encouraged connection without overwhelming verbal interaction. These activities created a safe and equal starting point for everyone and supported initial group bonding.

## FLOW OF THE WEEK

After the cohesiveness of the group was formed, the focus shifted to creativity and collective expression. Participants worked with storytelling, improvisation and group creation. Exercises included building shared stories from cards, creating movement-based performances in small groups, and using roles such as narrator, mover, and witness. There were also nature-based reflective moments, such as dancing for and from nature, or going alone into the forest to listen and respond through movement. Group improvisation games and "performance creation" sessions allowed participants to bring together movement, voice, imagination, and personal experience in a playful way. The week also included more reflective circles and sharing spaces to support integration of experiences.

This step-by-step process is important in non-formal education because it supports emotional safety, inclusion, and real participation from everyone. Young people are not pushed into deep sharing or group work too quickly, but instead are guided through a process that respects their pace and comfort. Learning happens through experience, reflection, and interaction with others, not just through words or theory.

In this way, young people can gradually move from focusing on themselves, to building trust with others, and finally to creating something together as a group. This makes the learning more meaningful, easier to connect with real life, and more likely to stay with them after the exchange ends.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM PARTICIPANTS

- How fast it is possible to create closeness and group cohesion
- How can I stay with my movement while I connect with the others?
- How the river can be calm sometimes and turbulent other times, but it's still the same
- How are we acting differently from our normal habits?
- What do we see differently here?
- How do we interact with the landscape around us?
- What do I need to be able to trust?
- We can express a lot through sounds and body language, even without using real words
- Having more attentive and intuitive observation
- How connected we are to nature
- Being mindful of touching each other and our skin
- The power of voice as a tool of expression
- How the presence in nature is different when you are alone
- The importance of being authentic and listen
- There is no correct way
- Having fun is healing
- Performances can be very simple, does not always have to be something craaazy or deeply meaningful
- We can trust the process of improvising, just staying open to what comes. No need for structuring and planning details.
- Being playful



# STORIES OF EXPERIENCE

*"Creativity is also one of my favourite ways to express myself, moving our bodies to move what has to move and express what we need to share. Creativity is also a way to connect with others who also have a story to share, and by expressing and watching our creativity, our bodies, and sometimes following it, I think it makes so much sense. I feel so much understood in this way, because two or more stories are listening and expressing at the same and sequential time — accepting, following, expressing, watching with all our bodies. Something like: "I understand your story more, and I try to make you accept it and walk into it by observing you, following you like you observe and follow me. Here together, heart to heart, with the power of our connection, we increase our strength, our voice, and free ourselves from what we needed to let go of."*

Elisa - participant



# STORIES OF EXPERIENCE



*In this week, there was a special space.*
*A space for breathing, observing, sensing, being.*
*Being alone, but not lonely,*
*being in a group, but very connected also to the inside.*
*Felt like we all together were one big bunch of grapes. Each grape flowty in a unique way.*
*Being a group grape.*
*Aaand we shared our juices, and then went on with lives.*
*With lives, that changed.*

*Ana - participant*

# STORIES OF EXPERIENCE

*“It has been a shifting experience in few ways: I've been able to deeply connect with new people, a lot at a time; to be more confident with in my actual self and the story I can tell, not needing to be a "better" version of it; to reconnect with my body in a moment that I have lost the compass; to embrace the different life stories, in everybody and inside me.”*

*Requel - Participant*



# STORIES OF EXPERIENCE



*"From the start to the end, I felt safe, well guided and supported. I am very grateful for having been in a space where I could explore my creativity and my body without feeling any sense of pressure or judgement. For me, it felt like a little check-up on myself, a reflection of who am I at this moment, which qualities I developed during the last years and where is still place to grow. So I am actually really happy about how the training went and what I got out from it. And last but not least...the food, the location, you as trainers, the constellation of the group...it felt complete to me."*

*Lotte - Participant*

# CONCLUSION

This Youth Exchange was a shared learning process based on non-formal education and youth work principles.
It is important that young people have spaces like this because they offer time and safety to slow down, reflect, and connect in a way that is often missing in everyday life. In non-formal education settings, young people are not judged or measured, but invited to explore, express, and learn through experience.

In youth work and non-formal education, young people can learn by doing, sharing, and experiencing together. They are not judged, but supported to express themselves in their own way. This helps them understand their feelings, build confidence, and learn how to communicate and listen to others.
These spaces also help young people step away from daily stress and reconnect with their body, emotions, and nature. This can support their wellbeing and help them feel more grounded.

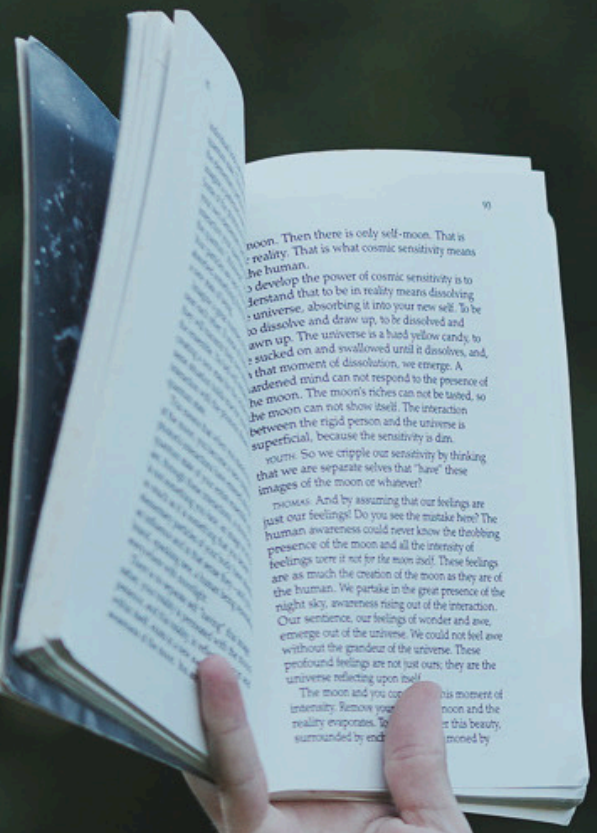
**Most importantly, they create space for young people to feel seen, heard, and included. This supports their personal growth and helps them become more confident and active in their lives and communities.**

## MORE INFO ABOUT THE PROJECT:

***www.moave.si/stories***

## PROJECT PARTNERS

**VulcanicaMente - Italy**
**Dreams for Life - Romania**
**Numinous - Germany**
**Terre de Nuages - France**
**Trib Arte - Spain**




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