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MANUAL & GUIDING DOCUMENT:
THE EMPOWERING CREATIVE MINDS'
ONLINE PLATFORM
(www.empoweringcreativity.eu)

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Content

Introduction	3
Context and vision	3
The platform	3
Navigating the platform	4
1. Accessibility	4
2. Components	5
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	13
Glossary	14

Introduction

Context and vision

Trauma and displacement fundamentally disrupt an individual's sense of safety, identity, and connection. For creative professionals and vulnerable individuals, these experiences can stall artistic expression or make traditional verbal communication challenging.

The Empowering Creative Minds project was born from a collaboration across four European cultural organizations: Comparative Research Network (CRN, Germany), Dla Ziemi (Poland), Douri (Luxembourg), and UNAEDI (Ukraine) and is funded by the European Union through Creative Europe.

Our shared mission has been to establish an art-based framework where trauma can be processed freely through different methodologies in our localities and communities.

By mixing creative modalities with contemporary psychology, the project provides a platform for understanding the projects, accessing all resources but also with tools for emotional regulation, personal resilience, and deep community integration.

The platform

This document serves as an exhaustive guide for artists, educators, cultural workers, and psychologists navigating the **Empowering Creativity Online Platform** (www.empoweringcreativity.eu).

It outlines how to access and navigate our whole website but also to implement, and maximize our curated Content Database (Knowledge) which hosts 10 core, scientifically backed, and field-tested trauma-informed resources.

The Empowering Creativity Online Platform acts as a secure digital hub, envisioned to protect the psychological safety of its users while offering open-access tools.

Navigating the platform

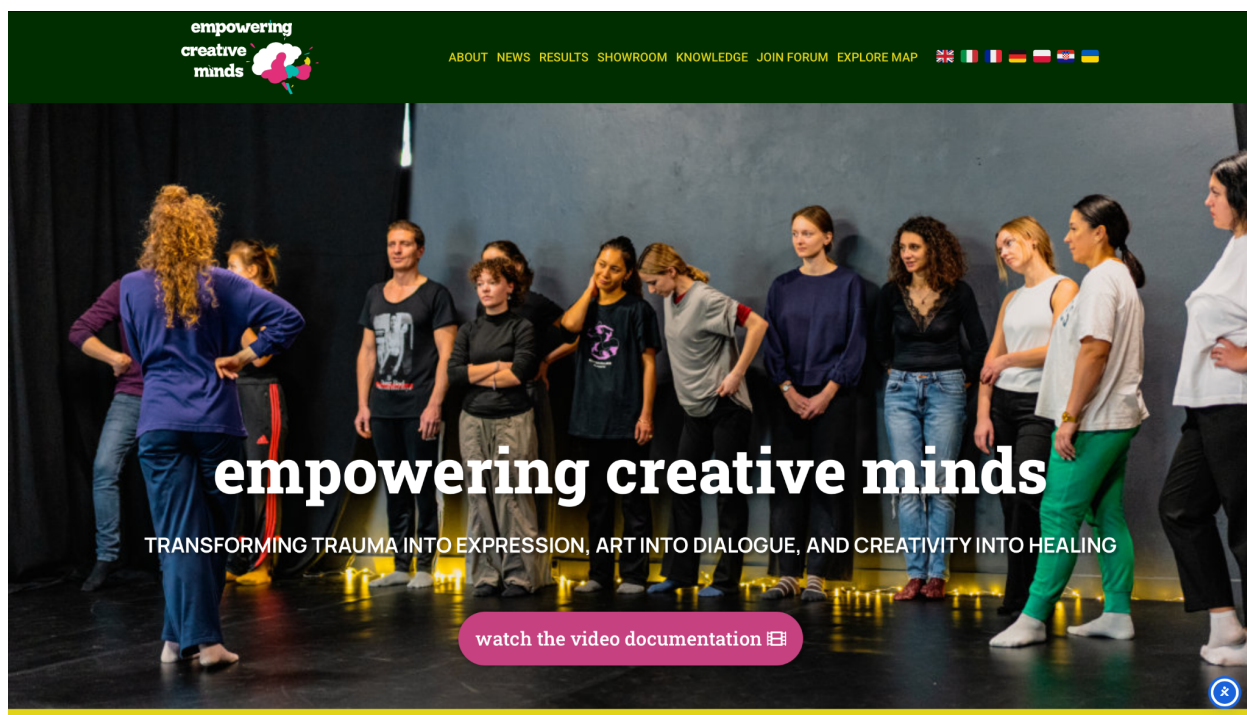
1. Accessibility

The platform is designed to be easily accessible for all audiences through five pillars:

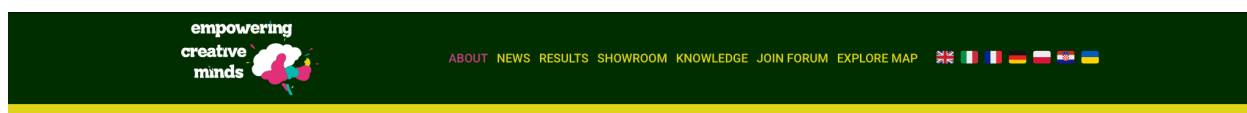
1. **Low cognitive load:** Minimalistic layouts and accessible navigation paths ensure that individuals experiencing high-stress or trauma-related brain fatigue are not overwhelmed.
2. **Sensory grounding:** Interface choices use soft, non-triggering visual cues, avoiding high-contrast flashing elements, while prioritizing audio and visual alternatives for literacy independence.
3. **Agency and choice:** Users always control their movement through the platform, with zero forced progression or invasive tracking elements.
4. **Language accessibility:** The website is available in all partner languages: English, French, German, Ukrainian, Polish but also Italian and Croatian.
5. **Accessibility menu:** The bottom right of the page (blue round character icon) offers options to adapt:
 - a. Language choice
 - b. Content adjustments (font, highlights, dyslexia font, spaces, alignments)
 - c. Colour adjustments (contrast and saturation adaptation)
 - d. Navigation adjustments (sounds, page read, reading guide, pause animations, big cursor option)

2. Components

Home page: The first page when clicking on the website (empoweringcreativity.eu) gives you an overview of the project and insights on the key results. By scrolling down, you slowly access the first four sections of the website: **About, News, Results, Showroom.**



About: First section on the top of the page, designed to explore the project's mission which highlights the vision and goals behind the project.



about

The Empowering Creative Minds project aims to create a reflective process to enable vulnerable creatives across Europe to confront and articulate their experiences of trauma through artistic means. The project's primary goals include helping vulnerable creatives express themselves, raise awareness about trauma, and launch creative processes to facilitate community discussion on trauma. The project aligns with the European Commission's emphasis on promoting good mental health, prevention, and early intervention for mental health issues. It also focuses on training artists, establishing an online information hub, executing co-creation events, and launching local pilot projects to support mental health resources and cultural integration. Moreover, the project fosters transnational cooperation, encourages diverse cultural exchange, and contributes to breaking through the stigma of mental health problems. The project further aligns with the Creative Europe Call's objectives by promoting creativity, cultural diversity, transnational collaboration, and education within the cultural sector. It emphasizes the use of art as a tool for social change and aims to address trauma through reflection, therapy, and communication within communities.



News: Second section on the top of the page, where one can explore the workshops and co-creation events through articles that have taken place in Berlin, Luxembourg, Lublin, and Lviv. By clicking on any featured event, you can read a detailed description accompanied by photographs, allowing you to get a glimpse of these collaborative and creative spaces.


ABOUT NEWS RESULTS SHOWROOM KNOWLEDGE JOIN FORUM EXPLORE MAP


news



ART, THE BODY AND NATURE AS PATHWAYS TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT TRAUMA

(Local Piloting workshops in Poland) On 16–17 May 2026, the Community Garden in Bratnik became



TRANSFORMING TRAUMA THROUGH ART

(Local Piloting workshops in Berlin) We are thrilled to share the results of our recent



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AS A RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

(Local Pilot Ukrainian Workshop) A field story from the Empowering Creative Minds project, implemented by UNAEDI

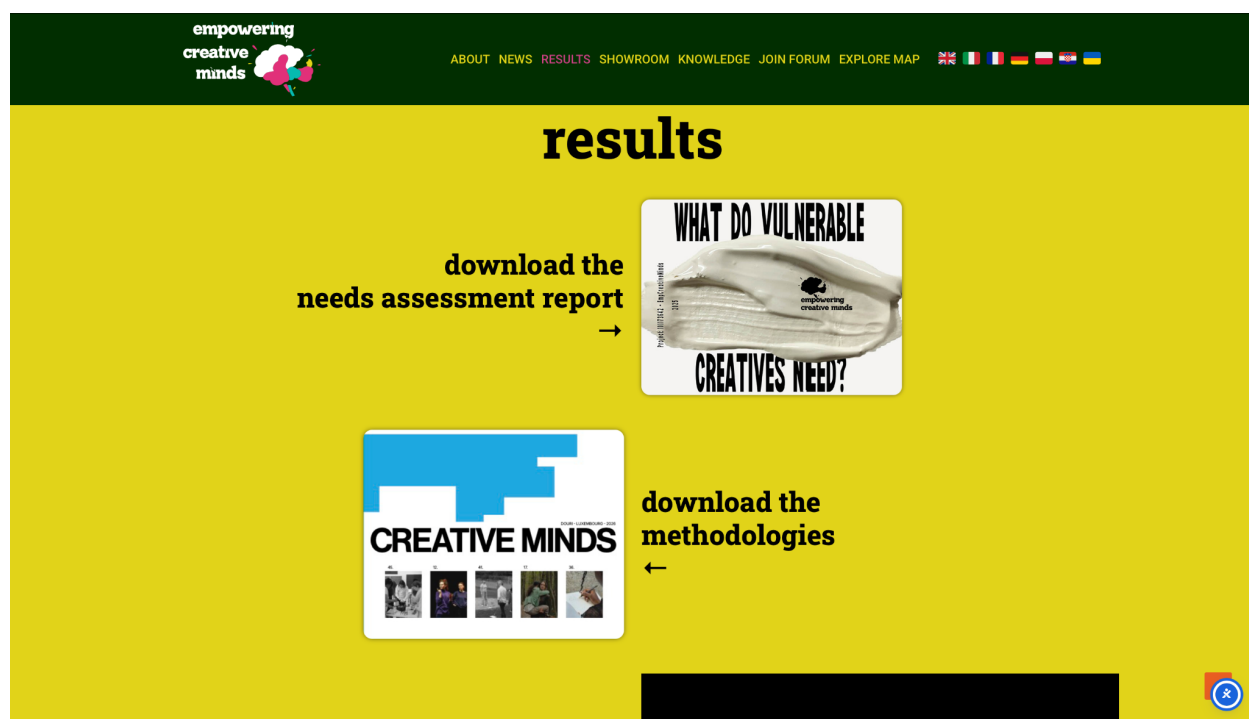


<https://empoweringcreativity.eu/art-the-body-and-nature-as-pathways-to-conversations-about-trauma/>

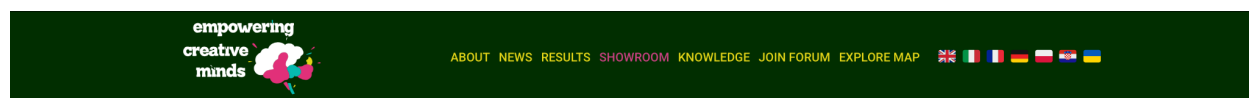





Results: Third section at the top, with access to main resources such as: the Needs Assessment Report: "What Do Vulnerable Creatives Need?" (in all partners' languages depending on the choice of language on the website), the methodologies developed by the different project partners, and the video documenting the Bratnik workshop. Just below, under the bold heading Recommendations, you can download a PDF containing practical recommendations based on qualitative research and co-creation with vulnerable artists in Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, and Ukraine. The document is intended to support cultural institutions and policymakers in developing more sustainable, trauma-informed, and inclusive approaches to supporting artists facing structural and social challenges.



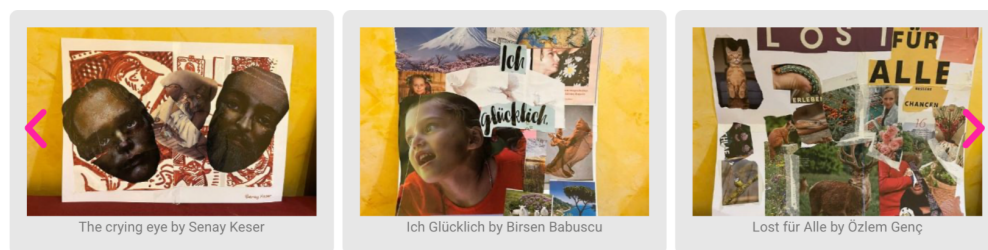
Showroom: Fourth section on the top, this section enables the user to discover the artistic outcomes of the workshops held in Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, and Ukraine. Even without interacting with the artworks displayed under each country, they automatically scroll across the screen, providing an engaging first impression. By clicking on any artwork, it opens in full-screen mode, allowing you to appreciate its details more closely.



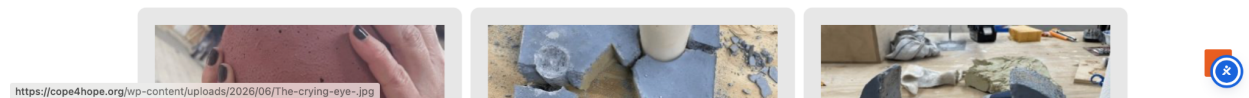
showroom

GERMANY

TRAUM-A: The Depths of the Self workshop



Broken Sculpture Workshop



Among the works displayed between the German and Luxembourg sections, you will also find the sculptures created during the Broken Sculpture workshop. The Polish project, entitled "Leaving Can't Stay," immerses visitors in a dark and mysterious forest environment. You can either watch the short film by clicking on the video on the right-hand side or browse the individual photographs displayed alongside it.

Knowledge: Fifth section on the top, a central library holding articles, multimedia instructions, and practical toolkits divided by topics. Each resource includes a title, a short description, and gives you the option either to visit the original external source or to download the document as a PDF. Designed to explore educational resources in the following categories:

Art Methodologies, Awareness, Cooperation, Empowerment, Non-formal Education, Safe Spaces, Self-care, Support, Trauma-Informed Care (TIC), and Trauma Awareness.

empowering
creative minds

ABOUT NEWS RESULTS SHOWROOM KNOWLEDGE JOIN FORUM EXPLORE MAP

knowledge valt

FILTER BY CATEGORY

All Art methodologies Awareness Cooperation Empowerment Non-formal education Safe spaces Self-care Support
TIC (trauma-informed care) Trauma awareness

FILTER BY LANGUAGES

All Croatian English German Italian Polish Ukrainian

LITERATUR ZUM UMGANG MIT TRAUMATISIERTEN MENSCHEN FÜR NICHT-PROFESSIONELLE FACHKRÄFTE

Word document with specialist literature on the topic

DOWNLOAD FILE

ANBIETER VON FORTBILDUNGEN ZUM THEMA TRAUMAPÄDAGOGIK

CSV file with a list of approx. 10 providers of continuing education in the field of trauma pedagogy, with short descriptions

DOWNLOAD FILE

FACHBUCH ÜBER TRAUMATISIERTE KINDER IN SCHULE UND UNTERRICHT

Hehmsoth, Carl (2020): Traumatized Children in School and Teaching: When Children Cannot Will. Stuttgart: Utb.

FOLLOW THE LINK

FLUCHT & GEWALT. PSYCHOSOZIALER VORSORGERICHT DEUTSCHLAND 2024

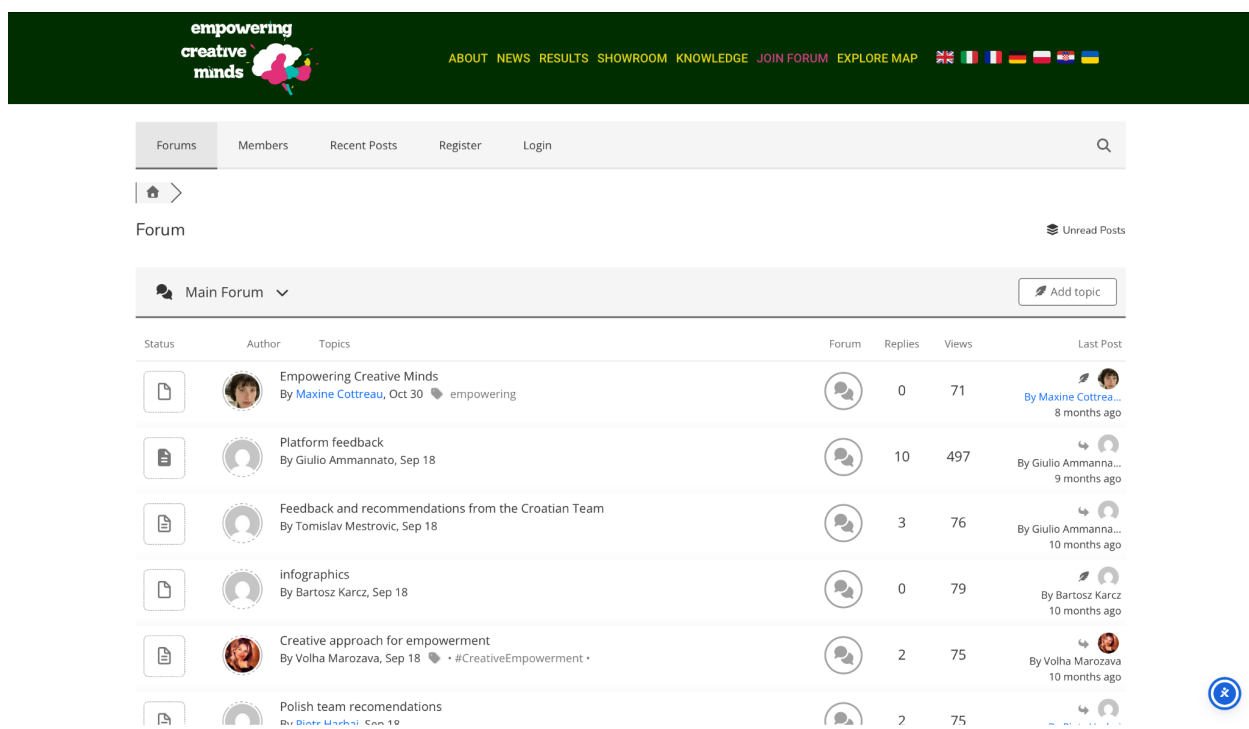
Report of the National Working Group of Psychosocial Centers for Refugees and Torture Victims

FOLLOW THE LINK

YOUTUBE-KANAL ZUM THEMA

To add to the Knowledge section, you must create a log in, upload or link the resource and categorise your input according to the available categories. Resources are reviewed by moderators before being available for safety reasons.

Join Forum: Sixth section on the top, a space that allows you to ask questions, open dialogues with other creatives, artists, project managers and mental health specialists. It is designed as a space for peer-to-peer reflection, multi-language dialogue, and the sharing of co-creative project outcomes (registration needed to participate).



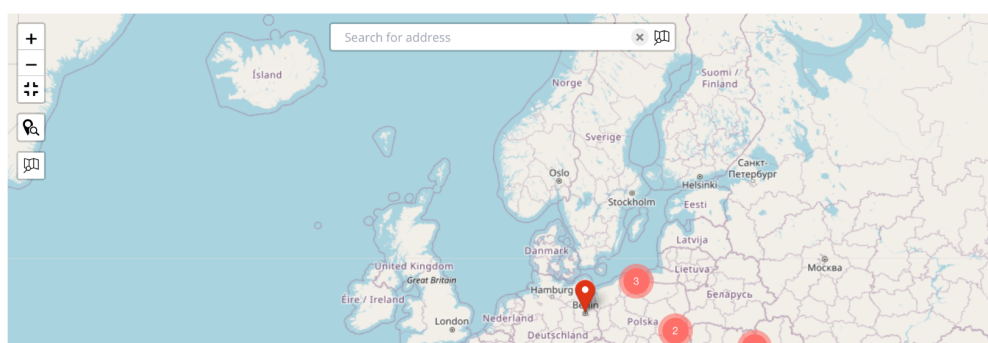
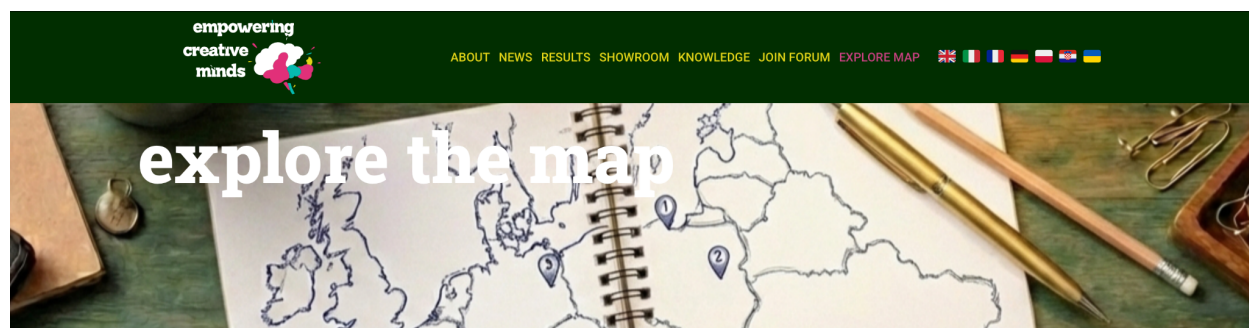
The screenshot shows the 'empowering creative minds' forum interface. At the top is a dark green header with the logo and navigation links: ABOUT, NEWS, RESULTS, SHOWROOM, KNOWLEDGE, JOIN FORUM, EXPLORE MAP, and flags for various countries. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'Forums', 'Members', 'Recent Posts', 'Register', and 'Login'. The main content area is titled 'Forum' and features a 'Main Forum' dropdown menu and an 'Add topic' button. A table lists forum topics with columns for Status, Author, Topics, Forum, Replies, Views, and Last Post.

Status	Author	Topics	Forum	Replies	Views	Last Post
		Empowering Creative Minds By Maxine Cottreau, Oct 30 • empowering		0	71	By Maxine Cottrea... 8 months ago
		Platform feedback By Giulio Ammannato, Sep 18		10	497	By Giulio Ammannato... 9 months ago
		Feedback and recommendations from the Croatian Team By Tomislav Mestrovic, Sep 18		3	76	By Giulio Ammannato... 10 months ago
		Infographics By Bartosz Karcz, Sep 18		0	79	By Bartosz Karcz 10 months ago
		Creative approach for empowerment By Volha Marozava, Sep 18 • #CreativeEmpowerment •		2	75	By Volha Marozava 10 months ago
		Polish team recommendations By Piotr Warkoch, Sep 18		2	75	By Piotr Warkoch 10 months ago

To participate in the **Forum**, you must create a log in. You can then create a post, insert links, pictures, questions, topics. Contributions are reviewed before being live on the website for sensitivity and adequacy reasons.

Explore the map: Seventh section on the top, Explore the Map section allows you to navigate through an interactive map of the project and resources. You can zoom in and out, and click on the pins representing the partner organizations and helpful organisations regarding mental health.

Each pin provides a brief description of the organization and, in some cases, includes a hyperlink directing you to its website for further information.



To add resources to the “Explore the Map”, you must log in onto the website. You can then add a pin with description, links and pictures. Resources are reviewed before posting for privacy reasons.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: Who is this platform designed for?

A: The platform serves two primary user groups: **vulnerable creatives** (such as displaced individuals, refugees, and survivors of trauma and anyone who wants to learn more on the topics of creativity and trauma) who need toolkits for self-expression, and **practitioners** (educators, artists, art therapists, social workers) looking to integrate safe, somatic exercises into their existing practices.

Q: Do I need a professional degree in psychology to use these methods?

A: No. While these methodologies are built upon sound psychological principles, they are explicitly designed as *creative, non-clinical interventions*. They do not replace intensive psychotherapy but serve as supplementary tools for community healing, emotional regulation, and self-advocacy.

Q: How does the platform handle the language barriers of displaced artists?

A: The interface relies heavily on universal visual communication, symbols, and high-quality video demonstrations. Text assets are gradually being localized across the project's partner languages (English, German, French, Polish, and Ukrainian) to facilitate cross-border integration. More languages are available for the general website and the Knowledge section through the flags and the accessibility tool (little blue round character at the bottom-right of each page).

Q: Can these resources be downloaded for offline use?

A: Yes. Each of the resources that are downloadable can be consulted offline if downloaded prior. All resources from the Results section are also downloadable free of charge. Indeed, the documents are designed for offline workshops, ensuring access in locations with unstable internet connections or within temporary shelter environments.

Glossary

Art Practices: The habitual, experiential engagement with creative materials, physical techniques, and artistic processes (e.g., painting, rhythmic drumming, somatic dance). Within this manual, art practices are prioritized for their *process-oriented* value rather than their *product-oriented* outcome, serving as safe, tangible containers for raw emotional externalization.

Co-creative pilot workshops: In the case of this specific project, collaborative community art initiatives hosted across Germany, Poland, Luxembourg where artists and vulnerable groups worked as equals to co-produce cultural narratives.

Creative methodologies: Structured, evidence-based frameworks that deliberately employ artistic disciplines—such as movement, visual arts, music, storytelling, and drama—to achieve specific therapeutic, educational, or community-building goals. In this project, these methodologies are specifically designed as non-verbal, clinical-adjacent tools to bypass traditional speech barriers and safely access deep emotional processing.

Creativity: The human capacity to generate, explore, and manifest novel ideas, forms, or interpretations. Within a trauma-informed context, creativity is recognized not as an elite artistic talent, but as an innate psychological drive and adaptive survival mechanism used to re-imagine alternatives, reclaim personal agency, and rebuild broken internal structures.

Trauma: An emotional, psychological, or neurological response to an event, series of events, or chronic circumstances that overwhelms an individual's deeply ingrained ability to cope. Trauma alters cognitive processing, memory storage, and nervous system regulation, frequently trapping survivors in a state of hypervigilance where past terrifying experiences feel continuously recurring in the present body.

Trauma-Informed Practice: A framework that assumes an individual is more likely than not to have a history of trauma. It shifts the question from "*What is wrong with you?*" to "*What happened to you?*", emphasizing physical and psychological safety, trustworthiness, and empowerment.

Non-Verbal self-expression: The practice of externalizing internal emotional states, memories, or concepts using physical materials, bodily movement, or musical arrangements rather than spoken or written syntax.

Somatic grounding: Body-centered techniques (such as deep breathing, rhythmic shifting, or tactile focal points) used to pull an individual out of a trauma response (flashback, panic, dissociation) and securely anchor them back in the present moment.

Healing: An active, non-linear process of restoring psychological equilibrium, emotional integration, and a sense of physical safety following profound disruption or trauma. Rather than erasing past history, healing in a creative framework focuses on reducing systemic nervous system reactivity, integrating fractured memories into a cohesive life story, and reconnecting with community.

Hyperarousal: A state of high physiological and psychological tension marked by anxiety, hypervigilance, and exaggerated startle responses, often triggered by reminders of past traumatic events.

Vicarious traumatization: The emotional and psychological residue that energy workers, art therapists, and educators experience through deep, empathetic exposure to the traumatic stories and expressions of those they support.