Juggling Motherhood & Profession

JU.M.P
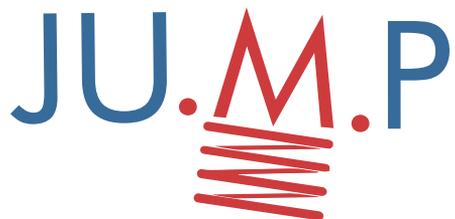
TRAINING COURSE

UNIT 1
RECONCILIATION
AND ENHANCEMENT
OF PROXIMITY NETWORKS

CONTENTS

1. THE JU.M.P. PROJECT

JUMP – Juggling Motherhood and Profession- is a strategic partnership for adult education funded by the Erasmus + Program of the European Union. It is a transnational learning network made up of professionals from the social sector, experts, and university students from Italy, Croatia, Greece, and Spain. The main purpose is to share and experiment innovative practices of social support, coaching, and guidance, thereby providing groups of vulnerable mothers with innovative social support methods adapted to their complex conciliation needs in order to increase their employability.

In addressing requests for help from vulnerable women, social workers face particularly difficult challenges, seeing as they need to:

- Work on women's employability in order to make them able to cope with job demands by offering training, guidance, and coaching services.
- Facilitate the entry or reintegration of women into the labour market.
- Deal with issues related to one's family background and relational inclusion that often constitute a key issue (often implicit) that hinders participation in the labour market.

The JUMP project fits into this context with the aim of:

- Increasing the ability of social professionals to frame the requests for help according to the social, cultural, and relational roots of the beneficiaries.
- Providing social professionals with the tools necessary to comprehend the complexity linked to the reconciliation of family and work, also through an understanding of reconciliation that goes beyond the mere provision of family care services.
- Planning and testing innovative pedagogical methods of orientation and empowerment of women in the JUMP partnership countries (Italy, Croatia, Greece, and Spain) and sharing them outside the working group, to better address the issues related to the reconciliation between work and family, to parenting practices, relational inclusion, and employability.

The innovative training modules designed within the JUMP project are addressed to:

a. Professionals in the social sector (e.g. educators, social workers) who work to facilitate labour market participation of vulnerable social groups.

b. Vulnerable women (e.g. low-income, low-skilled, immigrants, single mothers) with young children who have never entered the labour market, or who are experiencing an interruption of their working career or working in low-skilled and unprotected jobs.

2. A COURSE OF ORIENTATION AND COACHING FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN WITH CARETAKING RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. REFERENCE CONTEXT

Reconciling responsibilities of caretaking and work is a challenge for women who become mothers in almost all the OECD[1] countries (OECD 2007). In fact, in the distribution of responsibilities within the family, women are in charge much more, compared to men, of the caretaking tasks regarding the care of children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, as well as being responsible for the domestic activities (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 *Minutes per day spent on work and study activities, and caretaking and domestic activities by gender, the OECD average, and JUMP countries.*

Paid work or study ——— Men   ——— Women
**Unpaid work (care and domestic activities)** ——— Men   ——— Women
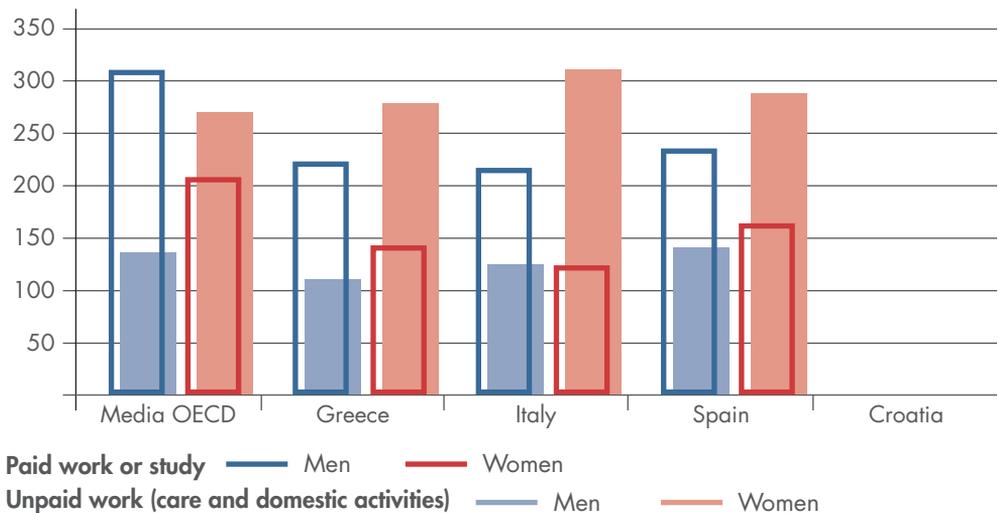
Source: OECD, Time use surveys, latest data available

[1] *OECD (2007), Babies and Bosses - Reconciling Work and Family Life: A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries, OECD Publishing, Paris.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264032477-en

Women who become mothers have a higher probability of losing their jobs or have a working career negatively conditioned by maternity. Even more so if the woman is not included in the world of work because she has never entered it or has been excluded from it in some way, thus she will find it even more difficult to enter it after motherhood (Fig. 2).

An important aspect to take into account concerns families in which only one of the parents is employed, because they are at greater risk of poverty and child poverty. Poverty in these cases does not depend on the absolute lack of work but on the insufficiency of income with respect to family needs. Furthermore, the situation worsens for immigrant women and single-parent families, as well as for families that have very poor networks of relationships and cannot rely on the help of relatives, friends, or other informal actors (see Output 2 of the JUMP project, available at www.jumpproject.eu/output/). In this context, facilitating women's access to employment leads to an increase in household income, thus reducing their risk of poverty, including that of the children present.

Fig. 2 Unemployed population due to family and caretaking responsibilities, EU average, and JUMP countries in 2017 (% population aged 15-64).
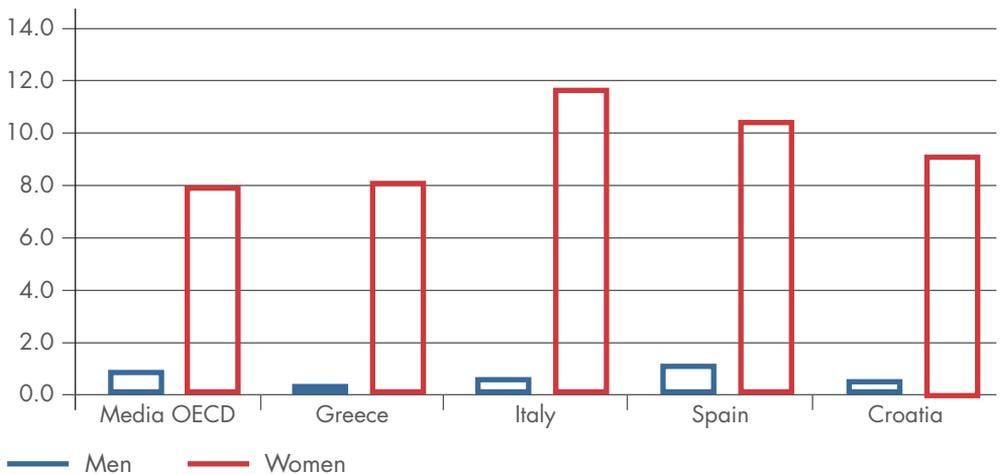
Source: Our elaboration of Eurostat-LFS data

Social workers who work in active labour policies and who intervene on vulnerable people encounter a complexity that makes it difficult to integrate or reintegrate these women into the work market. In fact, the objective is not only to help them find a job, but above all, to find solutions of reconciliation so that the woman can also dedicate some time to work and to the construction of her working career, thus reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Therefore, it is necessary to experiment new paths to be able, on the one hand, to provide intervention tools useful to operators and to make their intervention more appropriate and effective for complex situations and, on the other, to help women find an opportunity to improve their life situation and that of their family.

The JUMP project proposes contents and methodologies to support both the trainers and those who can use them. In particular, JUMP intends to enrich the instruments of the trainers by taking into consideration aspects considered fundamental for the success of the support paths for vulnerable women, by means of an experiential path of needs analysis, support in improving one's resilience skills, and the formulation of a new planning.

2.2.   THE TRAINING PROPOSAL

From the analysis carried out in the early stages of JUMP and summarized in Outputs 1 and 2 (see www.jumpproject.eu/output/) and from the experiences carried out by the project partners, 4 issues have been identified as fundamental for those who have to offer coaching and orientation activities to vulnerable women with caretaking responsibilities. These issues have been detailed in 4 different booklets for social professionals, with the following titles:

1. Reconciliation and enhancement of proximity networks

2. Complexity of the parental role. Socio-economic background, migration, and multiculturalism

3. Development of Soft Skills

4. Welfare: conciliation policies and instruments

These four focuses are considered fundamental for increasing the empowerment of both the social professionals and the participants involved, for various reasons, summarized below.

1. Centrality of proximity networks: it is necessary to work on the   importance of relationships at different levels, on their recognition, use, and strengthening. Promote opportunities and support the achievement of the participants' autonomy through the construction (and maintenance) of networks. This means increasing their ability to cope with hardships and difficulties, and promoting forms of confrontation, exchange, and active inclusion.

2. Complexity of the parental role: in the word parenting we should find what the society of belonging expects from adults as parents, what is considered essential in supporting their role. The cultural, social, and economic context of reference highly influences the parenting style, also through the transmission of gender stereotypes, thereby creating different roles and rules within that small society called family.

3. The Importance of soft skills: these are "transversal skills", or rather those abilities that bring together personal qualities, attitude in the workplace, and knowledge in the field of interpersonal relationships. Soft skills are becoming increasingly important in the selection process and job placement, sometimes they are preferred to technical skills because they increase the probability of a person's success. It is essential to know how to recognize one's skills and develop them to increase one's level of employability.

4. Relevance of welfare policies: it is necessary to acquire knowledge of public measures and instruments, as well as existing care services that can support reconciliation. It is necessary for the person to be informed of what exists at the level of national policies, territorial services, and legal facilities. Often, if a person does not know about the opportunities, they cannot take advantage of them and, therefore, cannot break the chain of poverty in which they find themselves.

2.3.   METHODOLOGY

The definition of "social professionals" used in JUMP brings together a multiplicity of professions that work with vulnerable people, wanting to explicitly recognize the importance of adopting a multidisciplinary perspective on orientation, accompaniment, and social support. Therefore, they fall within the definition of social professionals: social anthropologists, social assistants, counselors, educators, trainers, mediators, guidance counselors, therapists, psychologists, et al. All of them are addressed in the JUMP booklets.

The social professionals have the role of **trainers** when they experiment with the activities proposed in the different booklets. Trainers must have skills in managing a group, and in particular they must know how to govern the dynamics of a heterogeneous group in situations of social and economic hardship.

The training proposal is presented and organized in the 4 booklets for trainers, offering elements to deepen the individual issues (chapter 3) and methods and instruments for implementing and experimenting them through group work (chapter 4), thus creating a flexible modular training path consisting of 5 meetings.

The methodology proposed is participatory and active and is based on the stimulus used by the trainers to bring out the experiences and reflections of the participants, by enhancing them and projecting them in a logic of activation and planning, all in a climate of non-judgmental confrontation and listening.

For the participants, the exclusive model of the individual taking charge is overcome through the group. In fact, activated with this methodology, the group is a dimension that:

- welcomes;
- helps to reduce anxieties and difficulties;
- encourages comparison by establishing a peer to peer relationship of openness and trust that allows the sharing of problematic experiences and the expression of opinions;
- manages any conflicts by returning to the values of knowledge and mutual respect;
- stimulates personal activation;
- helps the broadening of their own representations;

2.4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAINING PROPOSAL

The JUMP training course was designed to be a tool to be adapted based on the resources, characteristics, and needs of both the participants and trainers. Therefore, it is a modular path made up of various components in which the order of the discussion of the topics and the use of the tools depend on different variables, including:

- the expected results;
- the characteristics and number of participants;
- the setting (place, time, relational climate, equipment, ...);
- the methodology used.

The topics addressed in the different booklets are connected and related to one another and the training module is designed to be administered in full.

In particular, the topic of parenting appears to be transversal and represents the leitmotif of the path. In fact, this content constitutes a point of reference and returns in the topics addressed in each booklet; this transversality is confirmed by the parental role shared by all the participants. In the experimentation of the training course in the 4 JUMP countries (Output 3; see www.jumpproject.eu/output/), in the sessions, the influence of this topic clearly emerged through the stories of the women/mothers.

However, the topics of the 4 booklets have been constructed in such a way that they can also be proposed exhaustively singularly, in particular as regards the topics: soft skills, welfare, and proximity networks, so that they can be adapted from time to time to the needs and objectives of the trainers and participants.

In summary, it is possible to organize the training course freely, with regard to the treatment of the modules, by following the order considered most appropriate in relation to the different training needs.

2.5.   ORGANIZATION OF THE TRAINING ACTIVITIES

In order to better identify the tools and methods to be used during group activities, it is suggested to collect the description of the family and personal situation of each participant through a summary data collection form (family situation, origin, age, work experience, level of literacy and language skills …).

It is possible to schedule an initial interview to get to know the person and their personal and family situation directly and to identify their needs and have a final interview that allows the verification of which objectives have been reached and which ones still have to be supported.

Finally, a follow-up group meeting can be organized (at least one month after the end of the training activities) in order to identify and enhance every form of the participants' activation, thereby, through the example, stimulating the women who are encountering difficulties in the change and bringing further informative contents that are useful for the whole group.

2.6.   ROLE OF THE TRAINERS AND CULTURAL MEDIATOR

For the organization and management of the activities, the presence of two trainers is proposed, who can decide how to take action during the activities by taking turns in the presentation of the same and in the management of the classroom, and by observing and monitoring the climate.

Depending on the characteristics of the group, the presence of a person dedicated to mediation can support trainers during the activities, integrating what is proposed and supporting the participants for a better understanding and a more active participation, in a climate of trust and non-judgmental listening.

Where deemed appropriate, the direct testimony of experts can also be proposed, depending on the topics being dealt with.

2.7.   TIPS ON USE OF THE TOOLS

Each booklet contains various operational tools from which it is possible to choose based on the characteristics of the group and the time available.

Each tool, when called for, is identified with a specific icon:

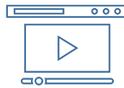|		
Brain storming	Interview	Follow up
Intervention by expert, official, ...	Group work	Questionnaire form
Role playing, simulation	Videos, slides	Visiting a structure, service ...

It is possible to establish the order of presentation of the proposed topics depending on the composition of the classroom and the priorities that arise. Starting from the topics dealt with, it is useful to integrate the instruments with updated materials or relevant to specific situations.

Lastly, it is also possible to carry out an experimentation on mixed groups, thus favoring a comparison in the group between different perceptions and experiences of women and men, sometimes influenced by gender stereotypes.

2.8.   SUMMARY

The experimentation of the training meetings in the 4 JUMP countries confirmed that the choice of the four topics (proximity networks, parental role, soft skills, welfare policies) responds broadly to the objectives of the project. They represent a good formative hypothesis aimed at offering a path of growth and empowerment for vulnerable women with caretaking responsibilities that can be found in different phases of their life cycle, but which have in common the fact of being mothers with young children and/or being a caregiver of elderly and/or disabled family members.

From the feedback received following the experimentation, from both the social professionals and the participants involved, we have highlighted the results illustrated below.

The focus groups carried out with social professionals and the experiments conducted by the trainers highlighted the usefulness of a training course with theoretical contributions and practical exercises that:

- allow to go more in-depth and adaptations;
- leverage the possibility of implementing a change also through mutual learning between the participants and the trainers;
- activate a circular process of exchange and growth;
- enhance group management skills when addressing issues that involve not only thoughts but also strong emotional involvement;
- develop a process of belonging and inclusion towards acting as a community.

For the participants, the added value highlighted regarded:

- having found support and encouragement in a non-judgmental climate, to strengthen one's self-esteem, knowledge, and awareness of value of one's skills, and autonomy;
- having developed proximity both in responding to their own needs and in activating community ties;
- having found stimuli and "fitting" tools, suited to their own characteristics.

The training was carried out in different countries and contexts and this made it possible to insert different ideas and approaches in the methodology, selecting and adapting the tools to the context and expanding the possibility of the results.

In particular, all the project partners considered it effective to deal with the issue of soft skills not only with women who already entered or are in the process of entering the labour market, but also with those who for specific moments in their life or for cultural, family, etc. factors, are (still) far from it.

It has also been proven that this experience, given its modular nature, can also be proposed in training courses that are already structured.

Despite the persistence of difficult conciliation conditions for those who want to enter or re-enter the labor market, it has been observed that the issue of reconciling personal, family, and professional life is not currently considered crucial and of general interest. It is dealt with sporadically, also according to the territorial specificities, and only in some particularly structured and solid productive realities. The struggle that women lead to deal with and overcome discrimination, which places them in situations of isolation and poor recognition of their abilities and potential, is still widespread and rooted precisely because of their "natural" role as the main caregivers.

The JUMP experience offered women a good means to become aware of their own needs and above all, of their resources; in fact, it was found that this framework generated a change of perspective in the participants: from a kind of thinking oriented to "doing", typical of a mother's role, to the awareness of oneself as having transversal skills and potential.

In fact, the training became an opportunity to stop and take time to focus on themselves and look to the future; the learning that resulted has led to an awareness capable of generating and maturing their thinking about planning, whether short or long term.

In some situations, the training path allowed there to be a transition between a situation of complete irreconcilability (for cultural reasons, persistence of gender stereotypes or phases of life or personal motives) to a possible conciliation phase (albeit by accepting laborious activity, which, more than balance, involves a sort of tightrope-walking, or juggling - as the title of the project suggests); when their process of awareness, activation, and autonomy becomes more solid, it will be possible to achieve the desired and more balanced goal suggested by the English term "work life balance".

The training modules were implemented through the collaborative work from four different countries:

Italy is represented by the **Ufficio Pio of the Compagnia di San Paolo** (project coordinator; www.ufficiopio.it) which has a long and deep-rooted tradition of involvement in philanthropic activities and European experience, by the University of Turin-CirsDe (www.cirsde.unito.it/it) with research skills on the issues of female employment and conciliation and **ETA BETA s.c.s.** (www.etabeta.it), a social cooperative for training and job placement, with experience in conciliation issues, which contributed to the design and testing of the tools developed both with social and guidance workers and with vulnerable women.

Croatia is represented by **CESI** (http://cesi.hr), an organization that is expert in the realization of projects related to gender equality and aimed at improving the situation of women in the labour market.

Spain is represented by **Fundacion Senara** (www.fundacionsenara.org) which has contributed to the design and experimentation of tools developed with social workers and with a sample of vulnerable women.

Greece is represented by the **EEO Group** (www.eeogroup.gr) which is active in the implementation of local actions for the social integration of vulnerable groups and **KMOP** (www.kmop.gr) which has contributed to the design of the tools and their experimentation with social workers and vulnerable women.

3. UNIT ON RECONCILIATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF PROXIMITY NETWORKS

The processes of erosion of welfare services, the weakening and greater fragility of families, the increase in single-parent families, the precariousness and flexibility of work, and the migration processes, together with the European political-economic framework, have acted on the social impoverishment and, more strongly, on already precarious and vulnerable situations.

There has been a general deterioration in the quality of life of families, which feel more exposed to the difficulties and the risk of losing one's job and citizens' guarantees.

In this condition, everything seems too risky: a family feels a probability of loss that it does not feel able to sustain, it becomes less capable of planning or open to opportunities, and activates the kind of renunciation and closure that leads to isolation.

In this context, the potential of relational resources that the individual and the family can draw upon is a key tool for dealing with the challenges posed by social complexity. In particular, it is a matter of recognizing and activating **proximity networks**, that is to say, the set of relationships that forms the fabric on which a community is based to absorb the impact of the aforementioned complexity and to respond to the needs it creates.

A fundamental role is played by **primary** and non-formal **networks**, that is, networks of life consisting of the ties of kinship, friendship, neighborhood, or work. The primary network is a **natural grouping of individuals** and a unity of social life: the ties are relational in nature rather than functional. It is a dynamic and non-static whole, based on the reciprocity of individuals, on the absence of monetary exchange, and is subject to fluctuations over time that are created based on the circumstances.

The primary networks are crucial to supporting child care and allowing for conciliating work and caretaking responsibilities. These networks offer help in one's daily difficulties and, in the face of unforeseen circumstances, allow families to broaden their horizons and opportunities, to reduce their sense of insecurity and to obtain solidarity and closeness.

Communication, exchange, and support relationships that exist through networks play a fundamental role in maintaining adequate levels of well-being. However, these networks are often too limited to be able to meet the needs of the family and for some time, we have witnessed their rarefaction, especially in metropolitan areas.

With the reduction of the primary networks, it is therefore important to also cultivate the informal, more fluid, less aware, **weak networks**.

It is important to take care of these ties that unite neighbors, local merchants, other families, active citizens, and local associations. These networks allow for giving and receiving support from someone who is not required to do so and to mutually respond to essential needs, both material and intellectual and concerning aggregation.

Empirical studies have shown that the higher the number of social ties a person has, the greater the average life expectancy emerges, as well as a better quality of life[2].

These ties play a crucial role in intermediation. For example, in the search for new job opportunities or support in caretaking responsibilities, it may be useful to go outside of the circle of known relationships to rely on weak ties able to open communication with other groups of individuals, as it is likely that our closest ties are exposed to our own sources of information while, most likely, those outside our usual environment are likely to receive information that we do not have access to.

Before the advent of Social Networks, weak and occasional ties were subject to breaking easily and leaving the network of people. Today, once a contact is established, these meetings can continue, remaining vital in a form that can also become salient. Social networks offer a wide variety of information, social contacts, and support and, within them, the individual is more inclined to offer support: this way, a virtuous circle can be created in which the social capital fosters additional social capital[3]. However, the trainers must also highlight the possible negative consequences linked to the use of social networks. In fact, the circle is not always so virtuous and those with fewer instruments risk being dominated by it. For these reasons it is necessary to accompany them with a conscious and targeted use.

According to Di Nicola, Stanzani, and Tronca, closely linked to the concepts of relationship and social network since their first appearances (Hanifan 1916; 1920; Jacobs 1961), social capital appears in the research that focuses on its distribution in Italy mainly as a characteristic of administrative aggregates, substantially disconnected from the qualities, in terms of forms and contents, of the relationships experienced by the individuals (Putnam 1993; Cartocci 2007). This type of approach to the topic of social capital is partly due to the prejudice against community relations generated by the well-known Banfield survey (1958), which highlighted the intrinsic closure towards the public sphere of relational contexts of a family matrix. This has led the subsequent research to neglect or, worse, ignore the effects in terms of the role that production of social capital played in the daily life of individuals, tthrough their relationships.

[2] *Serra R., Logiche di rete. Dalla teoria all'intervento sociale, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2001*
[3] *www.lastampa.it/2013/09/19/scienza/limportanza-dei-legami-deboli-nelle-reti-sociali-3UW9XGvu LMqAuQJVQ9uiDP/pagina.html*

Social capital has therefore become exclusively a value orientation, largely coinciding with the virtue and civic sense of individuals.

From a historical point of view, it is difficult to separate the concept of social capital from that of relationship and networks of social relations. Various contributions of theoretical and empirical research on the topic of social support (Lin et al. 1986; Willmott 1987; Sarason et al. 1990) and of caretaking relationships (Di Nicola 1986; 1998; 2002; Stanzani 2007) have highlighted the role played by proximity relationships in the generation of social capital. In particular, the works by Nan Lin (1999; 2001) show that social capital actually takes the form of an embedded resource, that is, established and permanently embedded within social networks. In contrast with the theoretical approach of those who consider social capital a characteristic of aggregates of individuals and collectivity, Lin deals with the conceptual and operational definition of social capital starting from the dimensions of the aid that reaches individuals from their contacts. Therefore, social capital becomes measurable starting from the resources that individual subjects obtain from their networks of relationships.

For this reason Lin's studies represent a reference point for those who put the relational context at the center as capable of generating social capital.

According to the literature, today we are faced with two alternative strategies for the study of social capital that are difficult to combine. The first, predominantly collectivist, sees social capital as a quality (civic virtues, diffusion of third sector associations, etc.) of collective subjects, that is, social aggregates, mostly of an administrative nature (states, regions, provinces, etc.) and proposes a prejudicial vision of the same concept with respect to relations and networks of social relations. On the other hand, the second strategy is predominantly individualistic in nature and considers social capital a characteristic of individuals, determined by the availability and mobilization of useful resources which can be used for their own benefit by individuals, thanks to their social relations. The decisive weight given to the qualities of individuals, in the analysis of social capital, by the implementations of this study strategy, favors the lack of consideration of the differences (also morphological) existing between the different relational contexts (family, neighbourhood, networks of friends, etc.).

The approach of Di Nicola, Stanzani, and Tronca regarding these two strategies introduces some new elements. First of all, the concept of social capital is defined starting from the relational one: social capital is configured as a characteristic of social relations, which can represent a resource, or capital, for those who put them into existence. The salient dimensions with respect to the contents of social relations are trust and reciprocity. In other words, trust relationships based on mutual aid and support represent capital and this capital is social precisely because it is made up of relationships. The support functions carried out by these dimensions can then be differentiated with respect to the formal qualities of the relationships that represent a social capital. Relationships of trust and mutual support within a given social circle,

that is, among those who constitute it, will be configured mainly as opportunities for the closure of the interactive nucleus with respect to its environment. Relationships of trust and mutual support between a member of a certain social group and a subject external to it, guaranteed by the intermediation of an individual within the group, will instead perform the function of connecting the nucleus with its external environment. Facilitating the expansion of networks is one of the central objectives of the action of the social professional in the training module.

It is difficult to separate the concept of social capital from that of the **community network**. As far as they can refer to different social circles of belonging, community relations are almost always identified as a possible resource, as a heritage that can be mobilized to achieve a specific purpose, such as a social capital[4]. By giving value, through an educational pedagogical planning, to the creation of bonds, the aim is to solicit the growth of solid communities, develop a sense of belonging to one's own context, avoid depressive experiences, feelings of vulnerability, and a renunciation of opportunities that seem unsustainable when one can only count on one's own resources.

Social networks and social capital are two distinct concepts that, however, come into relation: on the one hand, it is the social network that represents the concrete backbone for social capital and it is the social network that can become capital for the subjects that form it; on the other hand, the social capital - produced by the social network - is able to modify the condition of the network nodes and therefore their actions and their interactive strategies[5].

The training intervention must support the motivation of people and families to invest time and resources in consolidating relationships with others in order to rebuild an informal social fabric capable of solidarity and mutuality. For a long time now, the concept of the proximity network has taken on relevance in the planning of training interventions in the social sphere. Identifying the proximity networks as a focus of the training intervention makes it possible to mobilize unexpected and not entirely known resources that will contribute to creating social capital and virtuous paths of empowerment in the medium-long term, as well as a conscious social participation.

It is therefore a matter of adopting an empowerment approach. Proposing that families take action by offering them opportunities for meetings, relationships, and mutuality also means transmitting an awareness of their role in society and of the power they can exercise: that of entering into relations with others and offering and obtaining support.

In this context, the role of social professionals is to convey trust and transfer knowledge about the opportunities for socializing offered by the territory. In fact, the territory is an arena of mobility, a defined reticularity, where the offer of service structures the area within which

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[4] *Di Nicola P., Stanzani S., Tronca L., Reti di prossimità e capitale sociale in Italia, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2008*
[5] *Ibidem*

people move to access resources and services that respond to their subjective perception of well-being.

Furthermore, proximity networks can be supported by forms of volunteering and social organizations that offer a constant presence in the territory, which offer opportunities for people to meet and allow the development of new relationships, sharing, proximity, and mutuality. In this case, the role of the trainer is to make these realities known and eventually to accompany people to discover them.

Lastly, it should be remembered that the importance of informal networks does not detract from the importance of institutional networks, indeed, the former can be central, also through word of mouth, to strengthening knowledge of existing institutional services[6].

In this sense, it is the task of the social professional to solicit the acquisition of a mental map of **all the relational resources that the family possesses** represented by the primary networks, the secondary ones, and the institutional ones.

[6] *In these booklets, the institutional services presented in the territory of residence are presented in general (see the "services of the territory" form). Instead, in the booklet "Welfare: policies and conciliation tools", the specific services dedicated to conciliation are illustrated*

4. OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE OF THE UNIT ON RECONCILIATION AND PROXIMITY NETWORKS

OBJECTIVE

This module has the objective of influencing the social aspect of the family/ single-parent unit so as to make it proactive in the research and construction of proximity social networks. The goal is to improve the quality of life, the relational level, the possibilities of access to economic resources, and the ability to manage family burdens in the eventual return to the labour market. Particular attention should be given to the context in which the participants belong (e.g. urban realities vs small communities).

SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

- Awareness and analysis of one's own conciliation needs
- Strengthening awareness of how the network can be a tool for knowledge and mutual support
- Implementation of the informal and formal networks
- Knowledge of the territory
- Acquisition of tools to improve one's organization

VERIFICATION

In order to verify the acquisition and/or improvement of skills/knowledge, it is proposed to organize a follow-up meeting in which to highlight, through the tools already used during the meeting, the level of activation of the single participant can come to light.

If all the modules of the meetings of the JUMP path are implemented, a self-assessment questionnaire can be constructed and managed with indication of the achievement of the individual skills expected for each module through a scale of values (e.g. from zero - having learned nothing -, to five - high level of learning -).

NUMBER OF MEETINGS

This module consists of 1 meeting.

CONTEXT/SPACE

- Large classroom where people can sit in a circle
- Chairs with a folding desk or at a table where one can write
- Space available for group movement activities
- Space for activities in subgroups

RESOURCES

- Internet connection, Computer, Projector
- Flip chart, post-it notes, markers, A3 paper, pens
- folders

ROLE OF THE TRAINERS AND CULTURAL MEDIATOR

The two trainers, based on their respective skills and capabilities, define how to take action and how to act in the presentation of activities and in the management of the classroom.

For example, one trainer can explain how to do the job to the group and then, together with the second trainer, can go among the participants to collect any requests for clarification or doubts or simply to support the person in carrying out the activity through encouragement and being nearby.

The presence of a specific mediation figure can support the trainers during the activities, by helping the participants have a better understanding and a more active participation in a climate of trust and non-judgmental listening.

ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS

 To facilitate group work, it is suggested to collect a description of each participant's family and personal situation through a brief data collection sheet (family situation, origin, age, profession …).

It is possible to schedule an initial interview to get to know the person directly and their personal and family situation and identifying their needs, and a final interview that will allow to verify which objectives have been achieved and which ones still need to be supported.

Lastly, a **follow-up group meeting** can be organized in order to identify and exploit every form of activation of the participants, thereby, through the examples reported, stimulating those women who encounter greater difficulties in changing and bringing further informative contents useful for everyone in the group.

Welcoming everyone and getting to know the group and presentation of the course path

Time[7]: 20 minutes
Tools: Use interactive presentation techniques where all participants are involved and valued

Action 1: What does networking mean, how is my current network composed?

Time[7]: 25 minutes
Tools: Chart of the group network "My network" form
(If the topic of solitude emerged strongly, it could be interesting to watch the video of the play by La fura dels baus, which can offer a nice message centered on the issues of trust, collaboration, and exchange. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNRaBOq41Vw)

Action 2: What are the networks that I have activated

Time[7]: 45 minutes
Tools: "Proximity networks - grid" form

Break

Time[7]: 20 minutes

Action 3: What networks can satisfy my needs

Time[7]: 40 minutes
Tools: "My network" form

Action 4: What my territory offers

Time[7]: 30 minutes
Tools: Scheda "Local services" form

[7] The times marked are indicative: depending on the number of participants and the degree of involvement, it may be necessary to rebalance the timing of each proposed topic/activity

WORK TIPS

It is suggested to use a brief brainstorming with everyone on the meaning of "network", thus gathering the linguistic diversity and images that the participants associate with the concept of networking.

Where deemed appropriate, images may also be downloaded from the Internet or other depictions.

You can also use a ball of yarn that the participants pass around, highlighting the intersections, the tension of the yarn between one another, and the number of weavings that will result.

From the brainstorming it is possible to reconstruct an example network of the "group" on the chart.

Post-it notes can be used to better represent the network of each participant, by attaching them to the floor and creating connections with adhesive tape when a point is shared by several participants.

You can also propose a dance, "a circle dance" (or other artistic stimuli) representing, with physical movement, the personal network that is enlarged through closeness, is created with its activation, and provides for the alternation and the multiplication of personal contacts. www.youtube.com/watch?v=A94BdqtuSH0.

The "Local services" form can be filled out by everyone or in small groups with the information that each person has, and will then be completed with the group work and the integrations of the operators present, so as to have a map of useful services that are known or that should be known.

The work on the proximity network allows participants to reflect on their needs and on the fact that the network can be activated to satisfy them. The network can also satisfy needs linked to the desire to become active in their free time through sports, and recreational, artisan, and artistic activities, because they facilitate socialization.

The conscious and critical participation in social groups/forums can be considered as a further stimulus to enlarge the personal network as an opportunity for information exchange and support.

To deepen the topic, you can organize a field trip in the area in order to learn about a service that can help create a network (e.g. time banks, neighborhood centers...).

If you use all 4 booklets, you can think of dedicating a moment of group comparison at the end of the path to see if there has been an extension of the proximity network with respect to the first network design they created.

At the end of the activity, it is possible to return all the materials made by the participants by organizing personal folders.

*The forms suggested are taken from:*

"Sostenere la genitorialità" (Supporting parenthood) materials from the Erikson series, Italian edition edited by Paola Milani, Sara Serbati, and Marco Ius - 2011

ETABETA (Conciliation Experimental Project 2016-2017)

5. WORK MATERIALS

The worksheets explained in this chapter can be found in digital version on the website: www.jumpproject.eu in the DOWNLOAD section

MY PROXIMITY NETWORK
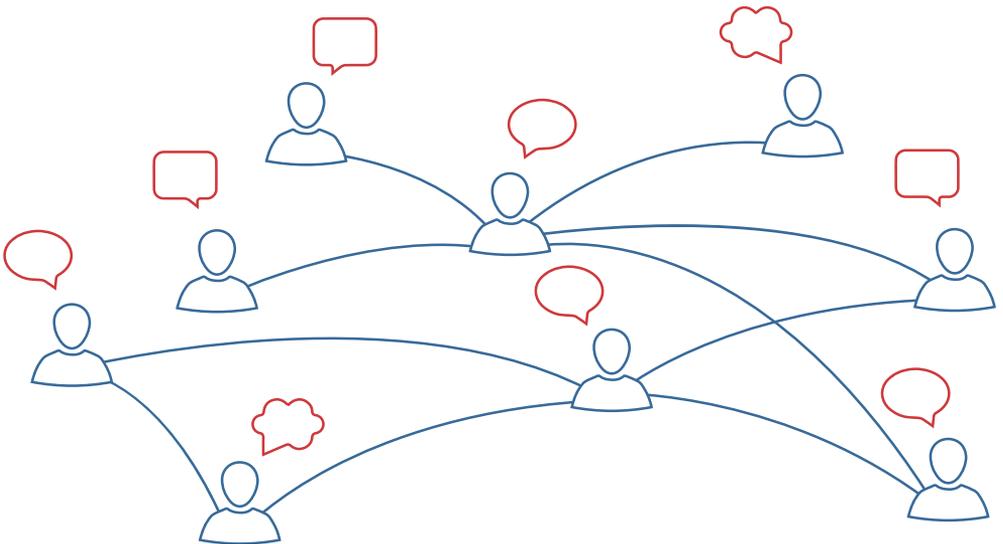
USE

The "My network" form is used as follows:

- pass out sheets of paper, pens and/or markers

- ask the participants to draw their own network individually using the proposal form as a template, or else freehand (letting each person draw or outline it as they wish)

- once the compilation is complete, invite them to present the work they've done. This request can involve all the participants or only those who wish to or feel ready to speak in public (the choice may depend on the time available and/or the willingness of the participants to tell their story).

If time remains, it may be useful to introduce the following in-depth analysis: ask that the strongest links and the weakest links in the network to be marked in different ways. On the margins, their needs/desires not satisfied by the network could also be marked. This in-depth analysis can also be shared in a group by all the participants or only by those who want to do so.

The activity on the network can also be proposed starting from an individual work ("My network") followed by working in a sub-group (maximum 3-4 people) so that a comparison is already activated and there is a first broadening of information. The request is to draw on a sheet of paper the network deriving from the comparison of the participants, thus integrating every single representation.

Each group must have time to present its "group network" to the classroom group, integrating and collecting any stimuli from the other participants and the trainers present.

The result is an overall representation of the proximity networks which each participant can draw upon, depending on their needs and interests.

Group reflection does not have to evaluate what is presented by the participants but become a starting point to understand together the meaning of the proximity network, verify one's own network (effectiveness, completeness, and need for strengthening) and gather ideas for its improvement. The objective is to encourage the activation towards the construction or strengthening of one's own effective network.

PROXIMITY NETWORK - Response grid

The 10 most important people (names)	Type of (partner, mother, friend, etc...)	Degree of trust			
		Little	Enough	A lot	

Taken from "Sostenere la genitorialità" ("Supporting parenthood") from the Erikson series "The Materials", Italian edition edited by Paola Milani, Sara Serbati and Marco Ius - 2011

Quality of relationship			Frequency of contacts				Length of relationship		
Good	Discreet	Bad	A few times a year	Every month	Every week	Every day	At least 1 year	2 - 5 years	> 5 years

USE

The "Proximity network - response grid" form must be distributed to each participant, inviting them to fill in all the columns, as suggested by the heading, from left to right. Participants should try to think of all the people who are part of their network.

If the form is too complex or the contents are considered sensitive, it can be simplified by proposing only the most significant items.

Once the compilation is completed, the person is invited to give it an overall reading, before meeting in a group. The goal is to make each participant recognize the potential of their network as well as the weaknesses that may be involved.

The social professionals can decide which elements to focus on in the final group reflection.

LOCAL SERVICES

Type of services	What they offer	Address	NOTES
Below you can list the different services in your area of residence that can be part of the personal/family network	Below, for each service indicated you can put a short description and/or list the activities that they make available	In this column you can find the address references, phone numbers, opening times …	List any notes or comments
SCHOOLS (crèche, nursery, elementary, middle, high schools)	Primary and secondary education	Address Telephone Opening times	
MUNICIPAL (registry office, public housing services, school lunch offices, employment services …)	Information, documents, service registrations, individual support		
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	Job search service	Job search service	
PLACES OF WORSHIP	Religious support, financial aid, food parcels, free clothing …		

SOCIAL SERVICES	Information, family support, economic support		
…			

USE

The "Local Services" form can be filled out individually, on which each person can list the services known and used with all the specifications, or be written in a group, with the contribution of all the participants. The objective is to create a mapping of services in the area that can be considered useful for providing updated and targeted information according to the needs and individual situations of the participants.

The trainer is in charge of integrating the information with the services in the area with respect to the different types (schools, public services, employment services, places of worship, social services, neighbourhood aggregation points …), so as to allow participants to complete their personal map of knowledge and activation.

Local social workers can be invited to present the services in the area, collecting the relative information on a chart or distributing any informative material.

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