



From the campfire to the digital world



**Joint Report On Main Findings
D3.1**

EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND
CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY:
EACEA.B.1 - Culture



Co-funded by
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This document was written by **Fryske Akademy**, as the responsible partner for the joint report on the main findings of the 3-year Creative Europe Programme project **“Lingotell: Storytelling – from the campfire to the digital world”** funded with the financial support of the European Commission.

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Lingotell is funded by the European Union. Views and expressions are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Creative Europe Programme. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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Report on main findings

Introduction

For minorities and Indigenous peoples, stories – sometimes told in minority and Indigenous languages – tell us who we are. They contain roadmaps for life and critical information about culture, history, important places and the way of living in the minority society. Moreover, minorities and Indigenous peoples have often heard the stories that have been told *about* them, instead of by them.

Restorying challenges the dominant narratives we live our lives by and the stories told about us. Restorying is the idea of reimagining and reshaping the stories of yesterday and today and by doing so changing the narratives we tell ourselves and the society around us.

Restorying is not about wishful thinking but about actively shaping our beliefs and actions to align with a more desirable and better present and future. It requires a combination of imagination, determination, and practical steps to bring about change.

The joint approach to achieve this is to examine the process of collecting, retelling and redesigning stories through the recreation and adaptation of stories, folktales or myths into new forms of cultural expressions, be it poetry, spoken word performances, (pop) music, theatre plays, etcetera.

In this report, we will outline the main findings from our joint experiences in the local workshops, and the key factors that we found make the restorying process successful.

1 Workshops and participants

In Fryslân, we started with an introductory workshop on Frisian folktales and experts who went through their own restorying process. This introductory workshop was open to participants from all backgrounds and ages. The further workshop series was held in secondary schools, where an artistic leader and a teacher worked with the pupils (around 15/16 years of age) on restorying in three sessions. The language was actually more an afterthought than a key focus point. The experts found this the best way to work with the pupils in an area where the language is reasonably established, and while the source material was Frisian, Dutch was also used for better accessibility to the other key elements in the stories. In Fryslân, the Fryske Akademy worked with Keunstryk, a project on cultural heritage in secondary education, to bring Lingotell and the participants together.

In Hungary, half of the participants in the workshop (aged 16-30 yrs) were unfamiliar with the collected Roma stories and tales. What's more, the project wished to represent both totally different languages, Romani and Boyash, and had to find two language experts and contributors to the artistic field. The first two workshop days were focused on choosing the stories they wanted to restory and work on the restorying process. The second two workshop days were spent on creating their own performance.

In Norway, the expert is a professor in Indigenous literature, and focused mostly on the stories and as an advisor on the idea of restorying. Because South Sámi covers a very big area, participants (young people between 15-17 years of age) had to travel far to meet up and work on restorying. The workshop leaders found that they really had to work on the confidence of the participants to perform. Most parti-

cipants were new to expressing themselves through music, lyrics and joik. It was decided to focus on the musical element of the joik, which was an interesting point of departure due to the discussion it created among the young participants about both the content of the joik but also the societal changes and cultural and historical issues. A main question was what you are allowed to do with traditional stories and ways of expressions, in your own culture.

2 Process of collecting stories

The process of story collection went somewhat differently in each separate region.

For the Frisian participants in the first introductory workshop, the organisation provided one main story, and two other stories as an example. The main story was a story that the workshop leaders had a personal connection to, and that they had examples of restorying from. The other two stories were used as an example of Frisian folktales and the morality that is often depicted in them, and as an example of how these stories have been collected in the past.

For the workshops in schools, the Fryske Akademy and local archive and literary centre Tresoar provided a list of Frisian stories and tales to choose from. We found this worked very well, because these stories provided enough inspiration for inexperienced restorers to draw from, and they weren't too difficult for pupils less knowledgeable with regards to Frisian language and culture. It also ensured the stories were suitable for the artistic leaders of the workshops to work with.

The stories, myths, songs and interviews were collected by language experts, translated from Romani and Boyash into Hungarian to make them accessible for all participants, and curated for the restorying process with help of the Independent Theater Hungary. This worked very well to bridge the existing cultural and language gap between participants.

In Norway, Sijti Jarngé worked with language experts and academics to modernize the South Sami language in stories written down by Ignacz Halasz in 1887, in this very area. Then two stories were selected from

the material, one about a proposal and one about Saajvoeh, a mythical people in Sami traditional culture. The stories were also translated into English and Norwegian. The youth were free to bring their own stories to the workshops, but they chose to work on the two stories.

3 Process of restorying

Before we started with the workshops, we'd already strategized a method of restorying, in which we outlined the steps we thought necessary for restorying traditional tales. In the actual workshop, each region used a personalized approach in cooperation with the local experts to see which method would work best, and how we can come to a joint methodology.

In each region, the participants were introduced to the linguistic and cultural significance of the local language. Besides, an introduction to folktales and traditional stories in general was given. In Fryslân, artists with experience in restorying were invited to introduce participants to the seemingly endless possibilities of restorying formats.

The participants were guided through the selected materials by examining what they might mean both in terms of morality as in regional identity and significance. Working in small groups or individually, the participants were introduced to a particular story, orally or in written form, to examine their meaning and reimagine the stories.

What we found was that, usually, a personal connection to the story or some other driving factor to reimagine the story (such as to battle stereotypes) was key to successful restorying. ProPgression in Hungary found that their participants in particular felt deeply engaged in the creative process of restorying because they could see themselves reflected in the stories.

The process of restorying also brought up questions of what is "allowed" to do with a traditional story. The workshop leaders already experienced in restorying were there to guide the participants through

that: how to find a balance between the message and values that the traditional story contains, and your reimagination and cultural changes. How to appreciate tradition but also modernize a story using new techniques and your own views. In essence, this also keeps the stories alive.

In all regions, the creative process ignited, rekindled a love for the local language, or made it burn brighter than it had. Interactivity was also mentioned: the participants could use the stories and restorying process in other aspects of their (professional) lives.

4 Key factors

Participants experienced being part of a **community** and gained more **confidence** in their cultural identity but also in themselves in general. It was found in all communities, but especially significant for the Sámi community, where many community members live so far from each other they rarely have the chance to meet.

In all communities it was found that, usually, stories are told about them. The community members are taught about themselves from others. Restorying is a way to reimagine and reshape the stories into something **relevant** for today and tomorrow. The stories contain almost a kind of roadmap for life and ways of living, about history and culture and important places. Using various methods of expression was also a way to **think outside the usual structure** that these stories traditionally come in in their own respective regions and communities. Even very old stories have links to today's society and can be used for the restorying process by finding that link. **Personal connection** is key. Young people discover there is much going on in old stories that still is relevant for them today. There must be something of cultural reflection that is so important and worthwhile that we want to keep it alive: we tell and retell the story looking at the future to create strong Indigenous communities essentially through storytelling.

To nurture the process of restorying the participants need a **safe space and the freedom to experiment** and use their own expressions.

For the future of the project, we would want to see cooperation between younger people and elder community members. Traditional values and languages are being lost and this coproduction of restored traditional tales could really **revitalize** them.



202200377 - Lingotell