

40 YEARS OF FORMATION AND HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

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During the 5th of November 1983 something happened that marked the beginning of a great history. It was then that the first formation program of Existential Analysis and Logotherapy occurred in Vienna. We managed to start freely and without legal restrictions, as there were no rules or laws about psychotherapy. It was a simple formation program about Existential Analysis and Logotherapy. It had been over 10 years since it was first mentioned that we would have a psychotherapy law, but it would not be until 9 years later that we would actually get one. Even if until then the law only allowed doctors to offer psychotherapy, we opened our formation program to all psychosocial professions. Apart from many doctors (at the beginning), our groups included, naturally, psychologists, on top of educators, theologians, social workers, and others. Two formats were offered in parallel: weekends (for those living nearby) and by periods (5 continued days, for colleagues from further places like Germany, Switzerland, and the west of Austria).

A rocky road.

It was not a matter of routine. In fact, Viktor Frankl did not consider it necessary. He considered that reading his books and attending his conferences was sufficient to become educated in logotherapy (LT). He always did it like that, and invited to his conferences people from other countries that wanted to become educated in LT. If we thought that was not sufficient, then we had to organize events in which we could read and discuss his writings in a group. In the end, what we learned the best would be through that “exegesis” (literally). Without a doubt, it would also be beneficial if we contributed relevant studies.

Therefore, the idea of starting a self-formation in any different way was rejected. Another form would not see it necessary and, on top of that, it could “dilute” the teachings. Also, the formation should have a place under the name of “Existential Analysis and Logotherapy” which Frankl opposed vehemently. It was to only be imparted under the name, “Logotherapy” (to be seen in a moment).

When the idea finally surged that we needed our own society, as we offered a formation program, we found more resistance. There already was the “Institute of Logotherapy and other methods of Psychotherapy,” which Frankl’s old assistant, the psychiatrist Dr. Eva Kozdera, had co-founded in Vienna together with Frankl’s daughter, Dr. Gabi Vesely, and Alfred Längle. How necessary was a society when the Institute already provided formation?

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At the time, there already existed in Vienna an association of psychotherapy directed by the psychiatrist Hans Strotzka, director of the Institute of Depth Psychology and Psychotherapy of the Medicine Faculty of Vienna University. When we tried joining this association, we found strong resistance. LT was in their eyes a “proselytizer community” of Frankl followers, rather than a serious and scientific movement of psychotherapy. This repulsion was dangerous to us, as it was becoming apparent that this group would have the main say in any future law regarding psychotherapy. If a law were to be approved, we would have little to no chance of getting recognition.

There were not only external difficulties, but internal ones as well: there was strong opposition from the part of Frankl regarding the inclusion of the umbrella organization of psychotherapy. He found it personally unpleasant to be accepted in the lines of conventional psychotherapies. He considered them a “terrible organization” (Längle 2022, 192), with a condescending predisposition towards psychoanalysis. “We don’t need that,” he told me. Because of this, we would not participate actively but wait calmly and composedly for them to approach and ask us to join their cause, because they would recognize the importance of our presence in the frontline of psychotherapy with our unique focus (cf. Längle 2022, 197). —Just a year after we joined the umbrella organization (and just a few years after the conversation just mentioned), Frankl renounced from the honorific presidency of the GLE (1991), although other motives had a more significant role. (ibid. 215).

The perspective of success of a formation with a viable organization was faint during that time. LT barely enjoyed any recognition nor respect in 1970s Vienna. Frankl acquired personal popularity and recognition in German speaking countries, where he was very appreciated, meanwhile he was not as kindly regarded by the psychotherapists of Vienna. This somber scene inspired little for the future of the project. But why not try, loyal to LT’s motto (Frankl, 1982, 67): “He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how”?

My precedents.

At 14 years of age, I became deeply interested in psychology and philosophy, and at 18 and 20 years of age, I was fully committed with psychoanalysis. During my psychology studies, I became familiar with behavioral therapy. During that time, I also learned hypnosis and catathymic imagery. I became deeply interested in Existential Analysis, and later in the conversational psychotherapy of Carl Rogers. I could see myself forming myself in Rogerian psychotherapy. However, in the end, I found the philosophical connection of LT more important, which was more relevant with Frankl than with Rogers. That convinced me to dedicate myself to logotherapy. Another crucial factor was that my then girlfriend and now wife, Silvia, was deeply interested in Frankl’s conferences. We assisted together for a year and then held long and sometimes heated discussions.

After my initial interest for depth psychology during my years as a student, my fascination for brain investigation remained, particularly, investigating memory. But external circumstances impeded it, for which psychotherapy once again presented itself as an alternative, and I had already decided to

go for logotherapy. In 1982 I assisted at the Second International Congress on Logotherapy in Hartford (Connecticut, USA), to which Frankl could not assist due to health complications. Due to this, Frankl requested that I talk about the contents of this congress in his polyclinic conference. Evidently, he liked my 13th of May 1982 lecture so much that he suddenly invited me and my wife to his house later. I was quite shocked when he requested to visit my student dormitory three weeks later. The logotherapy institute would go forward. He and his wife asked me if I desired to participate. (see also Längle, 2003).

I accepted and began to work with patients in the institute. As a member of the institute, I soon found it important to start a formation program. The institute's director, Dr. Kozdera, seemed very skeptical because it would overwhelm the institute's capacity. Gabi Vesely, Frankl's daughter, seemed rather neutral, as his father wasn't that enthusiastic regarding that type of formation. However, I finally managed to convince my colleagues that an institute of this type would only really gain any weight if it also offered formation programs. I agreed to develop a studies plan and discuss it with Frankl. I also accepted to be the most responsible of the teachings. Now everyone agreed.

Existential Analysis (EA).

From the beginning, I found important not to limit the formation to a simple education program in LT, but to utilize the name "Existential Analysis and Logotherapy." Frankl vehemently opposed this, and did not want the term EA to be used. In English, *Existenzanalyse* would be translated to "Existential Analysis," same terminology used to translate *Daseinanalyse* (Swiss school of psychotherapy), and therefore could cause confusion (Frankl/Kreuzer 1986, 19). In place of EA, to which he had referred as the LT theory until the 1950s, and going forward he only wanted to speak about logotherapy (p. e.g., Frankl 1947/1997, 30.) Throughout six months, Frankl held that we would not use the term EA again. Apart from this, and either way, he was in favor of making a seminar for the purpose of education. After one of Frankl's conferences (with Bruno Kreisky, by the way), we went to the nearby Sperl Café. Frankl was still overly excited about the event. I used the occasion to talk again with him and asked if I could use the term EA. With a shrunken heart, he told me: "If you're absolutely convinced and can reconcile with your conscience about taking out this term from the naphthalene of the past, do it, by God!".

That is how the formation program in "Existential Analysis and Logotherapy" was born. However, as counterplay, the terms had to go in inverse order when we gave the name to the association, so in the end, "Society of Logotherapy and Existential Analysis" (*Gesellschaft für Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse*, GLE for short). It is interesting to observe how only 4 years later (1987), Frankl denominated his book with the texts of five decades as "Logotherapy and Existential Analysis" and that, from then onwards, he followed this model. He even demanded that all formation institutions be named this way. Returning to our formation program: in 5th of November 1983 had place in Vienna the first formation course in Existential Analysis and Logotherapy; Lilo Tutsch and Walter Winklhofer were there.

Founding an association?

Once the opportunity of formation is created, it also entailed endowing it with an appropriate framework. The formation program was initially imparted in the Eva Kozdera Institute. Michael Titze was of major help in the debate in the design of the framework for the appropriate conditions for education, and gave us very constructive advice, based on his experience with the Adlerians. He affirmed that formation must be imparted in a democratically managed society and encouraged us to keep pursuing that path. He also told us that we had the potential to have a society of 200 to 300 members in a few years. We had a rough time believing him, but we began to daydream.

The theologian Tubinga Wolfram Kurz also had a vital role. Kurz became a speaker in the formation programs. Finally, he convinced Eva Kozdera about the importance of growing the organizational base of formation, which led to the foundation of a society.

The crux of the question with the umbrella organization

Eva Kozdera was a colleague of Hans Strotzka since her formative years. Due to this, she thought that a personal conversation with him could open the door to entering the umbrella organization, apart from the fact that Frankl was also an associate professor at the university. But, to our dismay, it was only a resultless cordial conversation.

Repeated efforts and an approach in Graz from the part of Lilo Tutsch and me to Professor Joseph Egger were necessary to, finally, get accepted in the association. In a personal conversation with Strotzka, he openly manifested his large reservations regarding logotherapy and their followers. He told me that he saw few possibilities of us getting accepted. I requested he allow me to present a new written and detailed solicitation. He finally accepted. And so, a new admission committee was created, headed by Joseph Egger. Shortly thereafter, a wait period of 5 years was introduced for new solicitors (there were no more after us). We accomplished this six months before the new psychotherapy law was approved. The admission committee considered that our formation structure was sufficient regarding its ways and contents, as well as the sponsor society, for us to be accepted into the umbrella organization, which had substantially contributed to the development and drafting of the law. Years of fighting and anxiety would come to an end in 1989, and how we figured as an institution that preceded the Psychotherapy Law. This gave us a straight path to recognition by virtue of the new law and became represented in the meetings of the Health Ministry from the beginning.

The formation

For years, Eva Kozdera and I directed the formation courses on the weekends and the periods, usually starting with two groups a year in Vienna, sometimes even three (a separate consulting

group). Viktor Frankl supported us by first assisting the groups one afternoon every year and answering their questions. Later, he came to each group once. Günter Funke participated occasionally in these courses and, from 1986 forward, Lilo Tutsch joined us as an educator, followed by Walter Winklhofer. Rolf Kühn, Rudi Kunert, from 1991 forward, Jana Bozuk, Christa Orgler, Helly Drexler, Günter Funke regularly, Silvia Längle in 1995, Erich Karp, Chrisitan and Michi Probst, in 2001, Toni Nindl, and others.

Due to Frankl's rejection of self-exploration, we only demanded ten hours of individual self-exploration in the first formation program. Group self-exploration was yet to be considered. After getting Frankl's go-ahead (he was always informed of every step), self-exploration was gradually increased and group self-exploration was implemented (Längle, 1996). As we know, self-exploration of around 250 hours was one of the reasons that led to the breakup between Frankl and the GLE, together with Personal Existential Analysis (PEA — published by Längle in 1993) and the development of bibliographic work. In 1983 we begun formation and overcame the obstacles; in 1991 Frankl demitted as honorific president of GLE and completed his severance from us. He did not wish to comment on it publicly, but he allowed me to write the telephone conversation and was willing to prove its veracity, which he did (Längle 1991a). Naturally, there were many reactions to this (Längle 1991b) and known personalities such as Tellenbach, Blankenburg, Guttman, and others, pleaded with Frankl to revert this severance.

German-speaking countries

Before that, a rapid development began. In 1986 a formation program started in Hannover, and the expansion in Austria began in parallel: the first formation program began in Graz in 1987 (Längle 1987), in Linz in 1989 (G. Funke), in Vorarlberg (A. Längle, B. Heitger), in Salzburg (T. Nindl, L. Tutsch, U. Reicher), in Innsbruck (W. Winklhofer, C. Orgler) and the first university program in Vöcklabruck (R. Bukovski).

If 20 years ago the GLE was already the third most important formation association in Austria, recently it has occasionally managed to become the most important (2022) and, currently, it has become the second most important specialized formation center, with 520 alumni (1% behind the ÖAS, which account for 10% of all candidates in training²). In total, we went through 128 groups, 68 in the federated states, and 60 in Vienna, without any of them being annulled. If we use a median of 14 people per group, around 1800 students have passed through our formation program in Austria; 59 educators and supervisors, and 9 professor educators are currently active in it.

² These statistics refer solely to that of associations. Given some psychotherapeutic specialties are offered in different associations, the statistics are naturally different when the number of students is broken down by specialty. Systemic psychotherapy represents 15%, CBT and client-centered psychotherapy are 14% each, way ahead of EA with only 8.9%.

Outside of Austria, the first GLE formation in Germany had place in Hannover during 1986, organized by C. Kolbe and with participation of A. Längle, G. Funke. Wasleiten, Winklhofer, and R. Kühn. This was followed by Munich, Bochum, Melle, Berlin, Goppingen, repeated in some cities and with more educators (E. Karp, Helga Müller).

The jump to Switzerland happened in 1994. Brigitte Heitger had organized a group in Bern (with A. Längle, B. Heitger and, on other courses, also C. Wicki and T. Jones).

Other European countries

1983 Finland: Günter Funke began to organize summer seminars in the country and, in 1985, A. Längle was also active in three localities. However, after a few more years of activities from Helka Makkonen, the initially promising interest dwindled, and no formation course took place.

1985 Yugoslavia: L. Tutsch and A. Längle held a series of seminars in the Zagreb psychiatric clinic and a Croatian society was founded that organized a conference in 1996, but no formation was imparted.

1986 GDR (East Germany): It was a great exception that the protestant church of the GDR managed to celebrate an introductory seminar to EA and LT, which A. Längle and G. Funke had organized. In 1990, the West German Society for LT had organized a conference in Augustusburg, near Chemnitz, but it was made clear that this group would not continue to follow our direction.

1989 Australia: Chris Wurm, general medical practitioner and expert in additions, had completed his formation in Vienna, and organized numerous seminars in Australia throughout 20 years and became a household name in LT. Unfortunately, no formation was ever organized.

1991 Italy: There were annual activities in Bolzano as well as in other educational centers, but especially for professors, with Wasiliki Winklhofer, Uwe Lau, Alfried Längle, Michi Probst, and Christoph Kolbe. Despite these large efforts, no formation was ever organized. In the rest of Italy classic LT existed. Years of collaboration with a Padovano Institute (Lucio Demetrio Ragazzo) resulted in few publications, but the difficult jurisdictional situation and frequent changes impeded a psychotherapeutic formation program to happen.

1993 Romania: Wilhelmine Popa, from Düsseldorf, was the first to start a formation program in her native country, in Timisoara. With earnest effort she founded an institute there and supervised various formation courses. Currently, there's a State-recognized society founded by Cristian Furnica. He also organized many courses in Bucharest, Arad, Cluj, Timisoara, and Brasov. Each textbook has been translated and formation courses are currently being imparted in Bucharest and Timisoara. To this day, there've been 21 formation groups with 289 participants.

1993 Argentina: Alfried Längle imparted formation seminars once or twice each year in Buenos Aires, in San Salvador University, for psychologists, psychotherapists, and consultants, with up to 250 participants. The concept of fundamental motivations awakened such interest that, in 1998, a program began in Mendoza that lasted for years, up until 2007, and that included individual

seminars until 2015. From the year 2000, EA was imparted in four universities in the city. In 2019, Dr. Andrés Gottfried began a 2-year degree in Mendoza University (UCA), in which 150 alumni from varied South American countries participated until 2004. Gottfried also imparts regular seminars in Guatemala and El Salvador.

1996 Czech Republic: Already in 1989, still under a communist regime, A. Längle was the first foreign doctor to impart an introductory seminar about LT and EA in the psychiatric clinical university thanks to the invite of the Medical Chamber, and then in 1993, together with Jana Bozuk, a seminar in Carolina University. Following this, Jana Bozuk began to form groups in Prague in 1996 and directed three of them. An active society was founded that managed to have the State recognize formation in psychotherapy. Since 2011 she has directed another 14 groups and is currently creating two more. Out of the 260 participants to date, 132 have received their diplomas. New courses are formed regularly. In total, 20 courses have been held in Prague.

1999 Russia: A. Längle created a formation group with Moscow colleagues and travelled there three times every year for a period-based course of 6 days throughout 7 years. Claudia Klun helped for many years, and Doris Fischer-Danzinger and Karin Steinert also travelled there once. In Russia, formation developed powerfully. In 2006 a society was founded, and in 2009 basic formation in the state university HSE became integrated into the regular Master's program with cathedrae imparted by A. Längle and various assistants. EA was imparted at least occasionally in 9 universities and was represented with entire formation programs in 5 universities. In 2019, Irina Ryazanova began the first *online* formation program from the GLE, the fifth of which has just begun. In total, 83 formation programs were imparted in Moscow, St. Petersburg and *online*, in which 1250 students participated. On top of this, various online events are currently held in Russia, with a maximum of 10,000 participants in any given moment.

1999 Mexico: Alejandro Velasco-Ramos had completed his formation in Vienna and begun a formation in Mexico. He directed a total of 4 groups, and his student María Elena Ramírez directed two more.

2004 Chile: Michèle Croquevielle and Gabriel Traverso spent many years assisting to Mendoza seminars (Argentina) when they organized one in Santiago. The first group organized with A. Längle as an educator (who now knew Spanish). This was followed by 12 more groups and years of teaching in two universities.

2006 Canada: Derrick Klaassen organized the first formation group in Vancouver (British Columbia) with A. Längle and D. Trobisch. Later, S. Pointner and I. Zirkus also joined the group. These same educators organized a second group. With initial support by A. Längle, there is now a total of 10 groups, and two more are already being planned. There are also groups in the neighboring province of Alberta.

2007 Poland: In 1998 the World Congress of Psychotherapy (organized by the World Federation for Psychotherapy) was held in Warsaw. This led to correspondence with the psychiatric university clinic, through which a formation group was established after years of effort. Godela v. Kirchbach and A. Längle travelled to Warsaw multiple times each year for years. In the meantime, local

educators had organized groups with more support from Austria and are currently creating a fifth group. This project has managed great professional acknowledgement of our formation in Poland.

2012 Ukraine: In 1993, Milan Kosuta, from Zagreb, and Alfried Längle, travelled to Ukraine to impart a week-long introductory seminar. However, this first initiative had no effect. Almost 20 years later, Alexander Barannikov, of Ukrainian origin, ran the first Kiev group originating from Moscow, together with his daughter Dasha, and A. Längle. This was followed by 4 more groups in Kiev and two in Lviv with other Ukrainian educators. Even throughout the war, formation continued (with due interruptions) and a new group began.

2014 Latvia: Svetlana Krivtsova and Natalya Dyatko began a formation group in Riga thanks to connections with Moscow. For the moment, there is no continuity, but the center that has formed is highly active and desires to be in the university.

2015 Slovakia: Here a small society has developed under the leadership of Petra Klastová Pappová. Until now four formation courses have been held and eleven diplomas have been given. There is great cooperation with the Czech society.

2017 United Kingdom: Svetlana Krivtsova and Galina Shalatova, from Moscow, began a first group of formation in London with Russian emigrants. It was followed by another three formation groups, two of which were university courses (Salzburg University), and the next one is being created. These groups are highly international and count with participants from 6 and 8 countries each. London is being converted into an international center for the GLE. Canadian and American educators work there, as well as Austrian and British educators.

2021 Lithuania: Yarina Kaplunenka and Vita Zabor, with the help of our Ukrainian Educators, which had been greatly impeded from creating new groups due to the war, have begun to impart formation in Vilna and, in the meantime, have begun a second group.

2022 USA: Daniel Parker has developed and began to run an *online* formation program due to the great distance required to traverse. Currently, he's creating the third group.

In many other countries, those interested in organizing a formation course have gotten in contact with us, or ourselves have gotten to work. Due to several reasons, many projects got sunk or failed, such as in The Netherlands, France, Hungary, Spain, Turkey, Siberia, Israel, Libia, Colombia, Brazil, Australia, Pakistan, Korea, Japan, and Malaysia. I'm already quite curious regarding if France might be the next country in which we can start a formation. —Maybe one of you could give us a hint about which country is ready for it...?

I hope that the formation program keeps inciting so much interest, and that educators keep enjoying to share these contents with their alumni, enriched by their life and their experience, and developing them together. It causes me boundless joy and emotion being able to be a part of such diverse and varied developments. We hear from many candidates that the formation has changed their lives, that they have more support and a better sense of direction in their hardest moments, that they experiment more depth in their encounters, they can feel better with themselves, and meaning is less of a problem to them. When we worked on this, we only really contributed to

extend humanity in our surroundings. Maybe it could be said: He who has a why to live can bear almost any how... I would like to highlight with gratitude that in the German-speaking world we sustain high comradery and an excellent work relationship. It's a pleasure to meet and educate each and every year the 75 educators and supervisors. Here's for great future years!

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