

Elini

EDUCATION FOR WELL-BEING AND GOOD COMMUNITY PRACTICES



*"Children are our most precious investment
for the future. We must nurture their minds
and hearts with care."*

Gianni Rodari

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Welcome to Elini,

It is with great pleasure that we present this volume, a testament to the journey of growth and well-being undertaken by the community of Elini.

Our village, nestled between the sea and the mountains, with its millenary history, rich traditions, and landscapes of incomparable beauty, is the living protagonist of an ambitious project that combines education, culture, and social innovation.

The project “Elini: Education for Well-Being and Good Community Practices” was born from the deep belief that a strong community is built together, by valuing human capital: relationships, emotions, and the skills of every citizen, starting from the youngest ones. Through practical workshops, educational activities, and playful moments, children learn to recognize and manage their emotions, develop respect for the environment, understand the importance of a healthy diet, and rediscover the identity value of local traditions.

Thanks to the Community Force© methodology and the four “C” rule — Knowledge, Understanding, Sharing, and Awareness — the entire community is encouraged to take an active part, care for both individual and collective well-being, and build a sustainable future together.

Elini is not just a small village in Ogliastro, within one of the world's few renowned Blue Zones, it is a place where the authenticity of human relationships and the high quality of life are priceless treasures.

Here, past and present interact: culinary traditions, history, nature, and landscape become tools of formative growth for new generations. At the same time, the community looks to the future with foresight and responsibility, proposing sustainable and

authentic experiences for its visitors.

This book is not merely a report: it is the living story of a community that knows how to care for its members, participate actively in its own development, and confidently invest in future generations. It is tangible proof that even in a small town, the synergic effort of all can build a serene, sustainable, and fully shared future.

With pride and deep gratitude, on behalf of the entire municipal administration, we reaffirm our commitment and the use of effective tools to manage the complexity of our ongoing projects, in order to build together a shared idea of the future.

*Vitale Pili
Mayor of Elini*

THE STRENGTH OF THE COMMUNITY

The Community of Elini has developed projects generated through a specific methodology designed to help people acquire key skills for understanding and adopting tools for both personal and group growth.

The Community Force® methodology allows us to:

- Read the present in the light of the past;
- Identify megatrends and current actions influencing possible futures;
- Distinguish what should be preserved and strengthened from what must be innovated;
- Build a shared and sustainable vision of the future.

The community's future depends on the choices and behaviors that, as individuals and as a group, we decide to adopt.

Sustainable Development and Social Innovation: Pillars of Change

The concept of autopoiesis, introduced in 1980 by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, describes a system capable of regenerating and sustaining itself autonomously.

This principle inspires our vision: a conscious, evolving, and adaptive community is the key to lasting well-being.

Objective: Quality of Life and Shared Well-Being

Building a conscious ecosystem together means promoting a community capable of self-organization, regeneration, and growth. This is the direction we want to pursue, a future built with responsibility, vision, and participation.





THE ELINI PROJECT: EDUCATION FOR WELL-BEING AND GOOD COMMUNITY PRACTICES

The “Elini: Education for Well-Being and Good Community Practices” project helps define new and modern approaches to supporting the growth of school-age children (6–11 years old), addressing relational gaps and social challenges often found in small towns and rural areas.

Modern contexts of social interaction and global megatrends, such as declining birth rates, depopulation, aging, and the lack of services and opportunities, are negatively affecting the livability of small towns.

The ability to identify new models and solutions is currently limited, often focused on “administrative” logic, such as the merging and downsizing of school districts, rather than on social innovation and formative relationships.

It is therefore necessary to work on paths of social innovation and processes capable of protecting children’s development and preventing the difficulties and problems that affect parenthood.

Towns engaged in this strategy of research and development of new models and practices of social interaction can redefine themselves through greater livability and stronger awareness of demographic protection, by offering services and attention to the harmonious growth of children and by supporting the life and housing projects of adults.

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” (Aristotle)

Through specially designed and implemented informal activities, cutting-edge educational protocols, and experiences in contact with the natural environment, the intergenerational context, and the community’s value system, it is possible to build a specific path

of emotional education for the younger generations, who will become, tomorrow, conscious adults rooted in the glocal context in which they grew up.

The project “Elini: Education for Well-Being and Good Community Practices” has fostered awareness regarding the environment and sustainable nutrition. Within this framework of play and experiential learning, children’s growth can be protected and supported, while helping parents to overcome the challenges of raising children, challenges that, increasingly in modern times and large cities, are linked to single-child families and social and economic sustainability issues typical of urban life.

Elini stands out as a community committed to accompanying the sustainable development of new generations. The workshops aim to develop children’s emotional intelligence, starting from awareness of their own sensations, emotions, and feelings. The issue being addressed has a global dimension: it is no coincidence that all 194 WHO member states have endorsed the Global Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2030, committing themselves to goals that aim to strengthen the psychological well-being of their populations. The objectives pursued by the project are aligned with those established by the United Nations Pact: to ensure that leadership and local governance focus on activities supporting mental health, implementing community-level assistance policies, and generating strong social awareness and prevention efforts.

The dissemination and communication of these actions will help create paths of conscious, serene, and engaged growth, rooted in systems of values and relationships. This is what prevents distress, isolation, dependency, resignation, and combats the stigma surrounding mental health, which manifests in various ways during adulthood. A political commitment grounded in vision and values must provide clear direction for the near future. The project calls for increased investment in prevention, in promoting well-being, and in pursuing mental and physical health — also by ensuring awareness initiatives.



Elini

EDUCATION FOR WELL-BEING AND GOOD COMMUNITY PRACTICES



During the months of September and October, Elini becomes the place where primary school children can grow while having fun.

A journey that combines play, creativity, and community,
TO DEVELOP WELL-BEING, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, AND
SENSITIVITY TOWARD NATURE AND TRADITION.



workshops:

THE CIRCUS OF EMOTIONS

Emotions: recognizing them, expressing them, and bringing them to the stage.

TRADITIONAL CUISINE

Discovering tradition by preparing s'anguli 'e cibudda.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Caring for one's village by building messages of respect together.







WORKSHOPS

The workshops were conducted by the Geriatria Serena Social Cooperative, which designs, provides, and manages services within the Health, Social-Health, and Social Assistance sectors. Its services, based on a multidisciplinary approach, operate throughout the regional territory — particularly in the province of Ogliastro — and aim to promote and support individual well-being by responding to complex needs through the design of preventive and supportive interventions. Within this framework, the Cooperative coordinates various educational services, seen as opportunities to promote and spread a culture of childhood — one in which children can express themselves and communicate freely. These services place children and young people in a learning process that exposes them to formative experiences essential for building their personal identity.

The workshops focused on emotional education, environmental education, and nutrition.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION WORKSHOP

In the Environmental Education workshop, children learn to respect their surroundings, to care for the places they belong to, and most importantly, to appreciate the beauty of living in their own community responsibly. The workshop involves public service figures such as the National Fire Brigade, who demonstrate how responsible behavior can help prevent fires.

Main objectives:

- Raise awareness on issues of personal and collective well-being in respect of the environment;
- Share and promote healthy lifestyle habits;
- Educate children to respect and care for the common good.





THE CIRCUS OF EMOTIONS WORKSHOP

The Emotions Workshop takes inspiration from the book “The Circus of Emotions.” In this activity, children engage in theatrical experiences that explore specific emotional states.

Recent scientific evidence — as well as daily news — shows that not only adolescents, but also children, often struggle to connect with their emotions, recognize them, and therefore know how to act appropriately in managing them.

The purpose of the workshop is to help children become familiar with emotions, give them a name, and learn to feel comfortable with them so they can develop the right tools to face even negative emotions. Staging a performance about emotions is the best way to normalize, in their eyes, every emotional state — even the most difficult ones. The activities were led by Maryna Korshun, an expert in emotional theater. Children participated in laboratory, movement, and theatrical activities, which also included short psychoeducational moments on the topic.

Main objectives:

- Recognize, express, and manage emotions;
- Encourage empathy, listening, and collaboration;
- Develop expressive skills (bodily, vocal, and artistic);
- Create a collective final performance.



TRADITIONAL COOKING WORKSHOP

The ancient cooking workshop was held at the meal preparation center of the Municipality of Elini, where the children prepared s'anguli 'e cibudda and pistoccu, traditional culinary products of the village. This hands-on activity emphasized the importance of certain foods, not only from a cultural but also from a nutritional perspective.

Main objectives:

- Reflect on healthy eating through the manual preparation of traditional foods;
- Learn about and appreciate the culinary products of our local tradition.





WORKSHOP RESULTS

- Acquisition of appropriate skills for sharing a common goal that serves not only personal but also collective interests;
- Ability to understand and embrace one's emotional side by applying what was experienced in a safe and supportive environment;
- Acquisition of basic knowledge and skills in the emotional, environmental, and nutritional fields as a necessary foundation for healthy growth within a community context.



ELINI, VOCATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

In a corner of paradise between sea and mountains lies Elini, where each morning one can awaken to the scent of Mediterranean scrub and enjoy both the crystal-clear beaches of Ogliastro and the rocky trails of Gennargentu within easy reach.

Elini is a peaceful oasis, located 500 meters above sea level, protected by imposing mountains and blessed with springs that make the land incredibly fertile.

Here, visitors can stroll among remarkable natural treasures, including two monumental trees found in the village, one of which is a *Eucalyptus globulus* Labill.

The fruits of centuries-old olive trees and flourishing vineyards paint a bucolic and picturesque landscape.

Elini is a small village in the subregion of Ogliastro, situated in central-eastern Sardinia. Ogliastro, which includes Elini, is recognized as one of the world's five Blue Zones, areas where a large number of centenarians live lives marked by environmental, social, and cultural well-being.

The village still preserves unique recipes such as *s'anguli 'e cibudda* and other traditional dishes passed down from generation to generation.

The most magical way to reach Elini is aboard the old Trenino Verde, whose small station, built at the end of the 19th century, sits along the railway line connecting Mandas to Arbatax (159 km). This journey alone is worth the trip: as the train winds through enchanting landscapes and limestone “*tacchi*” cliffs, it feels like traveling back in time.

Wandering through the narrow streets of the historic center, visitors can discover the story of this charming village: the ancient Parish Church of San Gavino, and the Carmine Park, where

remains of ancient nuraghi can still be found. Amidst lush greenery lies the fascinating Sanctuary of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, rich in springs and surrounded by dense oak woods. Today, the park serves as a key place of identity for the local community, especially during the Feast of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel, celebrated every year on the Sunday closest to July 16. On this occasion, a procession leaves the village, with young people carrying the statue of the Madonna on their shoulders, followed by the statue of Saint Mauro and accompanied by the traditional Sardinian rosary.

The historic center is well preserved thanks to the constant efforts of the Municipality, which safeguards the local culture, protects the town from decay, and preserves its real estate heritage of great historical and social value.

It is also one of Sardinia's most spectacular destinations for outdoor activities, perfect for trekking and mountain biking. The municipality of Elini extends to just over 900 meters above sea level, where holm oaks dominate the landscape, along with downy oaks and cork oaks.

Tall holly trees grow on the hillside, surrounded by Mediterranean scrub made up of strawberry trees, junipers, lentisks, and the scents of helichrysum, rosemary, and wild shrubs.

The local fauna includes mouflons, golden eagles, and endemic amphibians such as the Supramonte geotriton and the imperial geotriton, among many other native species.



HOSPITALITY AND VISION 2030

Elini offers a modern and contemporary form of hospitality, one that integrates slow travel with personal and environmental well-being.

Travelers who choose to stay in the village engage with both the community and the surrounding environment, moving and pausing at a gentle pace along paths and trails designed in a “daisy petal” pattern. These routes follow, both ideally and physically, the ancient and enduring paths once used by the local community, connecting the village to the countryside and back again.

From Elini, visitors can enjoy a meaningful and experiential stay, following the paths of the centenarians in a modern, slow-paced journey through places where generations have lived in harmony over time.

The “modernity” of Elini’s hospitality lies precisely in the natural integration between the village and its environment, a relationship shaped over centuries by the slow rhythm of life between places of work, orchards, gardens, woods, pastures and the village itself. Today, this offer is further enriched by a strong sense of inclusion, born first and foremost from the community itself through daily communication, participation, and collaboration.

The contemporary identity of Elini and its community is expressed through a daily life rich in social connections and driven by a profound transition toward socially and economically sustainable projects. Here, a new model of living and a renewed relationship between residents and visitors is not only possible but already taking shape, within a modern, sustainable, and deeply human framework of coexistence.

CREDITS

Project supported by

Fondazione di Sardegna e Comune di Elini

Project concept developed by

Badde Salighes 1879. Borgo Autentico di Sardegna e Riabitare la Sardegna.

Workshops carried out by

Cooperativa Sociale Geriatrica Serena

Graphic design by

Edge Studio

Promotional video by

Ju Film

