

Innovative Horizons

Project Code: 2024-1-IT02-KA220-ADU-000245481

SOCIAL SECTOR AND ADULT EDUCATION



JOINT REPORT ROMANIA, ITALY AND POLAND



IL BRUTTO ANATROCCOLO

Index

1. Objectives of the report	pag. 2
2. Socio-demographic context	pag. 2
3. Challenges for adults and social workers	pag. 3
4. Soft and digital skills	pag. 3
5. Inclusion, diversity and empathy	pag. 4
6. Active and inclusive educational methods	pag. 4
7. Case studies	pag. 5
8. Concluding remarks	pag. 5
9. Explanatory report – Training needs and online training proposals	pag. 5

Comparative report between documents from Poland (Rezsowska Akademia Fotografii), Italy (Il Brutto Anatroccolo) and Romania (CONIL)

The reports prepared by Poland, Italy and Romania as part of the *Innovative Horizons* project share many similarities, while highlighting specific features related to the national context, the maturity of the third sector and the educational strategies adopted. The comparison reveals a common basis of intent, but also different approaches to social governance, access to services and the use of digital tools in educational work.

1. Objectives of the report

All three documents aim to contribute to improving the quality of adult education in social contexts, with a focus on the empowerment of practitioners and the effectiveness of pedagogical tools. The conceptual framework is similar: it emphasises the crucial role of inclusion, the acquisition of soft and digital skills, and methodological innovation as levers for community resilience.

However, the **Polish report** takes a markedly project-based approach: it aims not only to describe needs but also to propose **concrete operational solutions**, such as blended digital training courses, toolkits for educators, and a roadmap for the creation of multimedia content. In this sense, it stands out for its proactive nature.

The **Italian report**, on the other hand, focuses on a systemic analysis of the Third Sector: it investigates the tensions between social vocation and bureaucratic constraints, the critical issues in human resource management, and the need to enhance existing structured networks.

The **Romanian report (CONIL)** takes a more cross-cutting and European perspective, describing the widespread marginalisation (Roma, disabled people, migrants, rural areas) and offering a comparative social analysis. It is designed as an advocacy tool to improve inclusion policies in disadvantaged areas.

2. Socio-demographic context

Demographic conditions are a cross-cutting issue in all contexts: ageing population, declining birth rates, urbanisation, rural depopulation and growing demand for support services.

In **Poland**, the urban-rural divide is marked: the report describes a network of organisations operating mainly in large cities, while more isolated communities struggle to ensure educational continuity. Significant internal migration is also noted, which creates territorial imbalances in the availability of qualified social workers.

In **Italy**, the focus shifts to the unevenness of services and administrative fragmentation between regions and municipalities. The network system, although well established, suffers from poor integration between the public and private social sectors, and there is often a lack of a unified vision between training, welfare and inclusion.

In **Romania**, the situation is even more critical: youth emigration abroad is depleting the available human capital and accentuating the imbalance between dynamic urban areas and declining rural villages. According to Eurostat 2023 data, 45% of the adult population in rural areas does not have regular access to the internet.

3. Challenges for adults and social workers

One of the main critical issues highlighted by all reports concerns the psychosocial well-being of third sector workers, who are often subject to high workloads, low wages and poor professional recognition.

In **Poland**, there is a lack of structured continuing training courses and difficulty, especially in small NGOs, in accessing European funds or programmes. Skills are often acquired “on the job”, without systematic support.

In **Italy**, the central issue is **bureaucratisation**: complex procedures, burdensome reporting requirements and excessive regulation reduce the scope for planning. This generates disillusionment and a sense of futility, contributing to burnout. It is estimated that over 60% of social workers have changed sector in the last 10 years.

In **Romania**, challenges include **mistrust of institutions**, stigma associated with mental health, a lack of health and education services in fragile contexts, and the absence of a widespread culture of continuing vocational training.

4. Soft and digital skills

All countries agree on the urgent need to strengthen key skills for adults, both interpersonal skills – such as communication, empathy and teamwork – and digital skills, which are increasingly essential in social work.

The **Polish report** includes an analytical grid that distinguishes three levels of digital skills (basic, intermediate and advanced) and proposes modular strategies for their dissemination. It also highlights the need to enable trainers to use online platforms and collaborative tools such as Moodle, Zoom, Canva, etc.

The **Italian report** promotes the functional integration of transversal and digital skills, thanks in part to the use of the **INAPP Atlas of Work and Qualifications**, a tool for defining professional profiles and training needs.

The **Romanian report** identifies the most critical issue as **infrastructural deficiencies** (schools without internet connection, lack of devices), combined with the **poor training of trainers**, especially in rural areas. According to ANES data, less than 30% of operators have certified digital skills.

5. Inclusion, diversity and empathy

Social inclusion is recognised as a cross-cutting priority. All reports emphasise the need to promote empathetic approaches, participatory activities and educational models capable of involving even the most marginalised individuals.

In **Poland**, NGOs play a particularly important role in urban areas, with consolidated experience in educational interventions for migrants, the long-term unemployed and people with disabilities.

In **Italy**, the network of organisations is relatively well established, with national actors such as **Caritas, CSVnet and Legacoop sociali** representing systemic references. However, there is a lack of central coordination in training processes.

In **Romania**, a **micro-community** approach prevails, with NGOs filling in the gaps left by the public sector, often with limited resources. Experience of “educational neighbourhoods” and initiatives such as *Moara de Hârtie*, which link inclusion, the environment and art, are valued.

6. Active and inclusive educational methods

Educational methodologies are inspired by active, experiential and transformative principles. Non-formal pedagogy is a distinctive feature of all three contexts.

The **Polish report** highlights the use of **blended learning, gamification**, practical workshops and **mentoring** as tools to promote adult learning. Particular attention is paid to the evaluation of educational impact.

In the **Italian report**, training is often provided by accredited bodies, university foundations or platforms such as **EPALE**. This provides greater stability but also rigidity compared to more flexible contexts.

The **Romanian report** promotes self-organised solutions, such as rural workshops and learning communities, which compensate for the scarcity of resources. Peer learning and artistic techniques (theatre, storytelling) are particularly widespread.

7. Case studies

Each report includes concrete examples to illustrate how inclusive education can be translated into action.

In **Poland**, three projects focusing on **women's empowerment**, **digital education for disadvantaged adults** and **intergenerational training through art** are analysed.

In **Italy**, the projects described focus on **integration between social services and digitalisation** (e.g. online assistance portals, virtual helpdesks, technology workshops for migrants).

In **Romania**, the case studies concern experiences of **school inclusion** for children with disabilities, artistic initiatives and cultural regeneration in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

8. Concluding remarks

Despite structural differences, the three reports converge on a common vision: adult education in the social sphere is a strategic factor for community resilience. Continuing education, the well-being of operators, the use of active methodologies and cooperation between institutions are essential elements.

Poland stands out for its approach focused on designing replicable solutions, with an emphasis on impact assessment and the development of educational tools that can be used at European level.

Italy has a more institutionalised but also more rigid system, with strong technical expertise but less flexibility.

Romania highlights a “bottom-up” dynamic based on community resilience and pedagogical creativity in the absence of resources.

9. Explanatory report – Training needs and online training proposals

The document analyzes training needs in the adult education and social work sectors, comparing the three partner countries involved in the project: Italy, Romania, and Poland. The aim is to identify common areas for intervention for the development of online training modules dedicated to third sector operators.

Comparative analysis of training needs

The national reports highlight six main themes, common to all three countries, which represent the priority areas on which to build shared training courses:

- 1. Mental health and well-being of operators**
 - Common issues: stress, burnout, lack of psychological support.
 - Needs: stress management, self-care techniques, professional resilience.
- 2. Basic and advanced digital skills**
 - Wide digital divide, especially in Romania and Poland.
 - Needs: digital literacy, collaborative tools, online safety.
- 3. Soft skills for social workers**
 - Recurring themes: empathy, effective communication, collaborative leadership.
 - Objective: to strengthen interpersonal and teamwork skills.
- 4. Inclusive education and active methodologies**
 - Use of participatory techniques such as social theater, storytelling, workshops.
 - Goal: train educators in the use of inclusive and transformative approaches.
- 5. Promotion of diversity, empathy, and inclusion**
 - Focus on intercultural projects, support for vulnerable groups (migrants, Roma, people with disabilities).
 - Objective: to build inclusive and identity-respecting educational environments.
- 6. Empowerment and active participation**
 - Co-design strategies, experiential learning, active citizenship.
 - Purpose: to enhance individual potential and involve local communities.

Conclusion

The file provides a solid basis for the definition of six online training modules, one for each theme, which will be distributed among the partners for development. The proposed training aims to strengthen the skills of social workers and educators, promoting innovative and inclusive approaches in the context of working with vulnerable adults and communities.

Below are two explanatory tables: the first identifies the training needs common to all three reports, while the second organizes the themes according to the topics that will be covered in the training courses.

Comparison table of training needs identified in the reports

Topic	Italy	Romania	Poland	Training needs
Mental health and well-being of operators	Stress, burnout, 'quiet quitting', lack of psychological supervision and recognition.	Low investment in mental health, stigma, lack of support in the workplace.	Stress, burnout, psychological tension and feelings of instability, anxiety, insomnia	Stress management, self-care techniques, professional resilience.
Basic and advanced digital skills	Technological gap, skills required in the social sector (DigComp 2.1), content creation, security.	Massive digital exclusion, only 27% with basic skills, need for tools and security	Significant digital literacy deficits, only 43% of Polish adults have basic digital skills, need for basic training, learn informally	Digital literacy, collaborative tools, cybersecurity.
Soft skills for social workers	Empathy, effective communication, problem solving, collaborative leadership.	Active listening, emotional intelligence, teamwork, intercultural competence.	Intercultural skills, teamwork, working in multicultural environments, inclusive education, communication and active listening, emotional intelligence, problem solving, resilience	Empathetic communication, conflict management, teamwork.
Inclusive education and active methods	Theatre of the Oppressed, circle time, service learning, peer education.	Blended learning, practical workshops, peer learning, informal learning.	Practical workshops, storytelling and Living Library, simulation games, design thinking, open space and world café, integration tandems, education beyond walls.	Inclusive methodologies for adult educators and social workers.
Promoting diversity, empathy and inclusion	Intercultural projects, workshops with migrants and disabled people, education on diversity	Programmes for Roma people, female carers, people with disabilities; community and micro-community initiatives.	Language, educational and integration support, workshops, courses, activation programmes and support groups	Building inclusive environments and intercultural practices.
Empowerment and active participation	Empowerment pathways, local experiences of active citizenship.	Co-design, micro-community models, peer exchange.	Experiential approaches, collaborative learning, involvement of participants in the learning process, co-design	Community empowerment, activating users' potential

Topics for online training

Training Topic	Contents	Training Objectives
Mental health and well-being of operators	Stress management, burnout prevention, psychological support, internal development.	Supporting the emotional health of operators to reduce turnover and increase effectiveness.
Basic and advanced digital skills	Digital literacy, online safety, use of multimedia tools and content.	Bridging digital divides to promote inclusion and innovation in social services.
Soft skills for social workers	Effective communication, empathy, collaborative leadership, problem solving.	Strengthen the interpersonal and collaborative skills of operators.
Inclusive education and active methods	Use of active techniques: social theatre, peer education, experiential learning.	Train educators and trainers in the use of participatory and transformative methodologies.
Promoting diversity, empathy and inclusion	Promoting cultural diversity, building inclusive environments, respecting identity.	Promote empathetic and inclusive attitudes in educational and social contexts.
Empowerment and active participation	Community activation, empowerment programmes, co-design and peer mentoring.	Develop awareness and leadership among beneficiaries and local communities.