



From training to action: how the Pillars of Power method is strengthening migrant empowerment in Europe



Following the “Training the Trainers” activities held in Valencia and Rome, the project is now entering the central phase of operational implementation of the skills acquired in real-life contexts. This is a strategic step, in which the knowledge developed is transferred from those responsible for training to frontline staff, and subsequently from them to migrant people in the partner countries. This activity is promoted within the framework of the MISUP project (Strengthening Migrant Supporting Communities), an innovative European initiative aimed at strengthening more inclusive and resilient communities, capable of supporting and promoting the empowerment of migrant people across Europe.

In previous interviews, professionals such as Arianna Pace and Liekje Welten shared the value of the training experience and of the Pillars of Power method. Today we take a further step: from training to action, observing how these tools are being concretely applied in local contexts. In Italy, organisations such as the social cooperatives Magliana '80 and FOLIAS — both involved in the training activities as MSOs (Migrant Support Organisations), which in addition to participating in the training also ensure participation in key project activities and dissemination of results — are currently testing and adapting the methodologies developed within MISUP. This phase represents a concrete moment of application, in which knowledge becomes practice and generates impact.



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From training to practice: the experience of FOLIAS

To explore this transition, we interviewed Roberta Marciano, a practitioner from FOLIAS. Roberta, who holds a degree in Geological Sciences, a PhD in Volcanology, and research experience in Germany, chose in 2009 to return to Italy and redirect her professional path towards social work, working as an intercultural mediator and social worker. She currently coordinates two social orientation and inclusion services as well as a reception and co-housing project funded by FAMI, and she is active in the Tandem Plus network for Erasmus exchanges.

The FOLIAS Social Cooperative, founded in Monterotondo in 1996, is a social enterprise that promotes opportunities for education, employment, culture, and integration, with particular attention to people in socio-economic disadvantage. The cooperative's work is oriented towards promoting equity and social justice, through the creation of bonds between people as a fundamental resource for the development of more active and cohesive local communities, where no one is left behind.

Interview with Roberta Marciano

Q. Can you tell us what the Pillars of Power method consists of and how you applied it in your work with the group of beneficiaries involved in the activities?

A. After the training held at the headquarters of the cooperative Programma integra, I considered the Pillars of Power method to be a useful tool. In particular, thinking about the pathways with migrant women we support within FOLIAS. I proposed to a group of beneficiaries, exiting the SAI of Monterotondo managed by ARCI, to take part in these meetings, precisely to bring out and value each person's resources, but also to create an important group space for peer exchange and comparison. We worked a lot on atmosphere, welcome, and on sharing from the very first meeting the aims and participation methods, to ensure that each participant could experience this short journey in a calm and safe way.



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Q. Among the activities proposed, were there any that participants particularly appreciated?

A. The group greatly appreciated the activities focused on recognising their own qualities; many of them identified very few or even none. The activity “I want / I can / I know / I have” was also very stimulating.

Q. During the process, did you observe changes in levels of trust, awareness, or motivation among the participants? If so, could you share a concrete example (e.g. a change in behaviour, participation, or personal outlook)?

A. Some of the women already knew each other, others did not. At the beginning this facilitated the formation of small subgroups, but the work on atmosphere and welcoming helped create a single, fairly cohesive group. At the first meeting each person arrived and left alone; at the last meeting they all left together, accompanying one another.

Q. Do you have any suggestions or advice for other trainers who want to use this method? What would you do differently, or what would you recommend paying particular attention to?

A. It is important to carefully assess the language level so that it is not too heterogeneous. Morning sessions are preferable, because for those with children it is easier to organise themselves and have a freer mind, without the “thought” of needing to return to their children.



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A method that generates impact

Starting from June 2026, five local events will be organised, one of which will take place in Italy. During these events, the project tools and the results achieved so far will be presented to a broad audience of stakeholders (approximately 150 in total, 30 per country). The meetings will also include a space for debate and exchange of ideas on the methodology adopted and on the potential impact it may have in other contexts and organisations.

This experience clearly reflects one of the central elements of the MISUP approach: transforming training into concrete impact on local territories. In all partner countries, trainers and practitioners are currently applying and adapting the Pillars of Power method, responding to the specific needs of migrant communities. This “chain” process allows knowledge acquired in training spaces to move beyond them and become real tools for empowerment, relationship-building, and social change. Through these practices, MISUP continues to support not only the professionals involved, but also the communities they work with, contributing to the creation of pathways of inclusion, trust, and participation.

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