

Pillars of Power in Action: Training the Trainers in Rome

Showing how the Pillars of Strengthening methodology works in practice to build MSO leadership and sustainability.



Empowerment is often described as a process of gaining confidence, skills and autonomy. Within the MISUP project, it is also understood as a shared journey: one that involves migrants, professionals, trainers and the organisations that support them.

As part of this journey, the MISUP project organised a Training the Trainers activity in Rome on 12–13 November 2025. The event brought together professionals working with women in vulnerable situations and created a space for exchanging methodologies, experiences and good practices.

At the centre of the training was the Pillars of Power methodology, a holistic and flexible approach designed to strengthen individual and collective empowerment through experiential exercises, reflection and dialogue.

A methodology rooted in presence, values and connection

The Pillars of Power methodology is a train-the-trainers empowerment programme developed primarily for migrant women. Its purpose is twofold: to support women directly and to equip professionals with practical tools they can use in their own work with communities.

The methodology is based on the idea that empowerment involves the mind, heart and body. Rather than focusing only on cognitive learning, it invites

participants to reconnect with their strengths, values, emotions and physical awareness.

Through experiential exercises, participants explore themes such as hope, positive thinking, social connections, personal goals, talents and values. These themes move gradually from collective reflection to more personal awareness, supporting participants in identifying what matters to them and how they can move towards it.

For trainers, one of the most meaningful aspects of the methodology is the practice of being present. During the Rome training, participants were invited to stand in front of the group and observe how their body felt in that moment. This helped them experience presence not as an abstract idea, but as a practical skill: being grounded, attentive and connected to oneself and others.

This is particularly important for professionals who work with migrant communities, where experiences of stress, displacement or trauma may be part of people's life stories. A trainer who is present and grounded can create a safer and more authentic learning environment.

Learning through the body, not only through words

One of the strongest elements of the training was its embodied dimension. Participants were encouraged to move beyond a purely rational or task-oriented approach and to engage with their body, breathing and emotions.

For Arianna Pace, social worker at Cooperativa sociale Magliana '80, this was one of the most powerful aspects of the experience. She works primarily with migrant women and victims of human trafficking, within reception and protection pathways for people who have survived exploitation.

During the training, one exercise focused on walking through the space, becoming aware of breathing, listening to sounds from the outside and then turning attention inward. Participants were invited to notice sensations in the body, especially areas that felt blocked or difficult.

This kind of exercise showed how the body can become a tool for working with others. It was not simply an instruction to follow, but an experience to feel and carry forward. For professionals in the social field, this is essential: the way they accompany others is deeply connected to how they understand themselves.

A space for self-awareness and professional reflection

The training also opened a space for participants to reflect on their own role as professionals. For Arianna, one of the main insights was the recognition of

her own potential: the feeling that there are still resources, capacities and possibilities within herself that can be explored and expressed in her daily work. This awareness was not only rational. It was emotional and physical, something that stayed with her beyond the training itself. It helped her reflect on how she relates to the people she supports and how she positions herself in her professional role.

From the trainer's perspective, Liekje Welten, project manager and trainer at Netwerkpro, highlighted how the methodology can have an impact over time. By reflecting on values, goals, support systems and concrete actions, participants can gain greater clarity about themselves and about the direction they want to take in life and work.

This clarity can support more conscious choices, stronger relationships and a more balanced approach to professional practice.

Remembering the power people already have

One of the key messages emerging from the training is that empowerment does not mean “fixing” people. It means creating conditions where people can reconnect with their dignity, value and inner resources.

Many migrant women and men have gone through experiences that require courage and resilience: leaving their country, their family and familiar surroundings, and starting again in a new environment. The Pillars of Power methodology recognises this strength and creates space for participants to remember that they are already capable and valuable.

This approach is highly relevant for adult learning and social inclusion. It shifts the focus from telling people what to do, to supporting them in recognising who they are and what they can contribute to their families, communities and society.

Building stronger communities through training

The Training the Trainers activity in Rome showed that strengthening migrant-supporting communities begins with the people who work within them. When professionals have the opportunity to explore empowerment in a practical, embodied and reflective way, they are better prepared to support others.

The experience also demonstrated the value of European exchange. For participants, meeting professionals from different countries and organisations created a space for learning, comparison and connection. It showed that, although contexts may differ, many professionals share similar questions, challenges and aspirations.

By bringing together the perspectives of a trainer and a trainee, this experience confirms that empowerment is not a one-directional process. It is a shared journey grounded in presence, self-awareness and human connection.

For Arianna, the experience can be described in two words: powerful and meaningful.

Through the Pillars of Power methodology, MISUP continues to create pathways that enhance professional practice and foster more inclusive, resilient and compassionate communities across Europe.

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