Edu4Impact - Adult Education Through Sport as a mean to Enhance Social Inclusion

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From the Research to the Training Plan

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1. Introduction

The Edu4Impact Project was created to promote the empowerment of educators and adult educators through innovative training opportunities that merge sport practice with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles. The project stems from the conviction that sport, when approached intentionally, is not merely a form of physical activity but a powerful pedagogical tool to foster inclusion, cooperation, and emotional growth among vulnerable adults.

Through a transnational collaboration involving partners from Italy, Greece, Spain, and Romania, Edu4Impact seeks to enhance the professional competences of those working in the adult education sector by integrating SEL into sport-based educational methodologies. The project emphasises that SEL competences (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills) are fundamental not only for personal wellbeing but also for effective learning and social participation.

To achieve these goals, the partnership conducted an extensive research phase aimed at investigating the training needs of adult educators and sport professionals who work with vulnerable adults. The research sought to understand how familiar these professionals are with the concept of SEL, how they already apply it (formally or intuitively) in their work, and what kind of training or resources could help them implement SEL more effectively through sport.
The research mainly targeted the following groups:

- Adult educators willing to integrate sport and physical activity into their educational practice as a means of enhancing inclusion and emotional development;
- Sport professionals who work with vulnerable adults, aiming to strengthen their ability to use sport not only for performance but as a medium for social and emotional learning;
- Third-sector professionals (in general)
- Vulnerable adults (secondarily)

It is important to clarify how the term “sport professional” is interpreted in each partner country, as the role, qualifications, and scope of such professionals vary across contexts:

- Italy: Professionals performing paid, continuous sports activities under formal contracts within clubs recognised by CONI or Sport e Salute ((Legislative Decree 36/2021, Art. 27).
- Greece: Coaches and trainers mainly working in local sports clubs and community organisations promoting physical education.
- Spain: Qualified practitioners registered under national or Catalan law, holding official sport education degrees or certifications (ROPEC).
- Romania: Certified physical education teachers, coaches, and trainers accredited by national law and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The research included:

- A literature review and good practice mapping in each country to identify theoretical and applied references linking sport and SEL.
- Surveys reaching over 350 professionals and participants across Europe to explore awareness levels, needs, and perceptions.

- Interviews with experts and focus groups with practitioners to gather qualitative insights and first-hand experiences.

Together, these activities offered a comprehensive view of the European landscape where sport meets adult education, helping to identify common challenges, best practices, and opportunities for innovation. The findings informed the creation of the Edu4Impact Training Plan, which translates research results into practical, experience-based learning tools.

2. Research Methodology

The research phase of the Edu4Impact project represented the theoretical foundation for the practical training that will be developed in the second part of the project. It aimed to investigate the current state of the art of integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in sport-based practices to foster social inclusion of vulnerable adults, and the training needs of our target groups.

The consortium designed a mixed-method research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative tools to explore both practitioners' experiences and the perceptions of vulnerable adults involved in sport and educational contexts. This methodology was jointly defined and implemented by all partner organizations to ensure consistency, comparability, and cross-national relevance.

2.1 Research Objectives

The research pursued the following objectives:

- To analyse the existing literature and identify good practices (if any) linking sport and SEL.
- To explore the training needs of adult educators and sport professionals working with vulnerable adults.
- To gather evidence to inform the design of the Edu4Impact Training Plan and future curriculum.

2.2 Methodological Framework

The research was structured into four main components, implemented by each partner in its own country (Italy, Greece, Spain, and Romania).

a) Literature Review and Good Practice Collection

Each partner conducted:

- A literature review analysing at least two academic or scientific papers on the use of sport to develop SEL competences or promote social inclusion;
- A good practice research, collecting and describing a minimum of three concrete examples of initiatives, projects, or programmes where sport was successfully used to foster emotional and social development.

This first phase provided a conceptual and empirical overview of how sport contributes to SEL, offering real-world models and innovative methodologies.

b) Surveys

Each organisation administered a survey designed to capture perceptions, experiences, and training needs.

Two main target groups were addressed:

- Adult educators and sport professionals working with vulnerable adults;
- Vulnerable adults themselves, participating in sport or educational programmes.

Each partner aimed to reach a minimum of 100 respondents in total to ensure statistical significance.

The survey was distributed online via Google Forms and collected data on:

- Familiarity with the concept of SEL;
- Experiences in using sport for educational or inclusion purposes;
- Perceived challenges and training needs;

Collected data were then analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to identify patterns, priorities, and country-specific needs.

c) Expert Interviews

Each partner conducted one in-depth interview with a professional experienced in applying sport or physical activity to the social inclusion of vulnerable adults, and knowledgeable about SEL approaches.
These interviews provided qualitative insights into best practices, challenges, and success factors, complementing the survey data with professional perspectives, and lived experience.

d) Focus Groups

Each partner conducted one focus group involving five to six participants. Participants were selected among sport professionals, educators, and other practitioners working directly with vulnerable adults, either already integrating sport into their practice or expressing the intention to do so. This selection ensured a diverse representation of professionals who could provide relevant, experience-based insights.

The focus group aimed to deepen the findings emerging from the surveys and interviews, allowing participants to reflect on their professional experiences, needs, and challenges related to integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competences through sport.

Before each session, participants received a preparatory document summarising:

- The objectives of the Edu4Impact project;
- A concise summary of the national research findings;
- The set of focus group questions (two generic, common to all partners, and two or three country-specific, based on local research results).

The document was translated into the national language and shared in advance to help participants become familiar with the research context and terminology, particularly the concept of SEL, which was sometimes new to them.

At the start of each session, facilitators introduced the project's goals and explained that the discussion aimed to gather real-life experiences, challenges, and suggestions from practitioners to help design the Edu4Impact Training Programme. Participants were reassured that there were no right or wrong answers and that the discussion would remain confidential and serve only for research and educational purposes.

Although adapted to each national context, the sessions followed a common structure, allowing for comparison of results across countries. Facilitators guided the conversation to ensure all

participants contributed and that discussions remained focused yet dynamic, encouraging shared reflection.

This methodology ensured that the focus groups provided qualitative, in-depth insights into practitioners' real needs and contributed substantially to shaping the Edu4Impact Training Plan, bridging the gap between theoretical research and practical training design.

2.3 Data Integration and Cross-National Analysis

After data collection, all partners shared their findings through a common reporting framework. National results were first summarised individually (Chapter 3), and then synthesised into a comparative analysis (Chapter 4) highlighting common trends, country-specific features, and key gaps in current training approaches.

This methodology combining literature, good practices, surveys, interviews, and focus groups, allowed the consortium to obtain a comprehensive and multi-perspective understanding of the link between sport, emotional learning, and inclusion.

3. National Findings

The following sections summarise the main findings from each country, highlighting key trends, challenges, and opportunities identified throughout the research. Together, these findings provided the theoretical foundation for the identification of the Edu4Impact Training Areas and the design of the Edu4Impact Training Plan and its five Training Areas.

The following pages present a summary of the research conducted in each of the partner countries and their findings. The complete research is to be available as annex and can be downloaded from the relevant section on the Edu4Impact website:
https://www.edu4impact.eu/output/

3.1. Italy

Literature & good practices

Both Italian partners, Consorzio Tartaruga and ENDAS Sicilia, reviewed existing literature on the relationship between sport, social inclusion, and socio-emotional learning (SEL).

The studies examined highlight that sport is a powerful setting for personal and relational development when accompanied by reflective and inclusive practices. It fosters self-regulation, empathy, and teamwork (core SEL competences that translate into better social adjustment and community participation).

Italian research particularly emphasizes that the educator or coach's role is central: sport only becomes an inclusive and educational tool when facilitators intentionally design activities that promote cooperation and emotional reflection. Spontaneous competition, by contrast, can reinforce exclusion or frustration if not guided.

The review also revealed the growing relevance of non-formal learning in sport settings, where experiential and reflective approaches align with SEL frameworks. Emotional literacy, self-expression, and communication are seen as key to making sport accessible and beneficial for all, especially vulnerable adults.

Good practices

The Italian partners identified several examples of good practice that illustrate how SEL principles can be embedded in sport:

- ENDAS Sicilia's community sport programmes, promoting inclusion through cooperative games and self-awareness activities, particularly for women and youth in disadvantaged contexts.
- Consorzio Tartaruga's empowerment pathways combining sport with psychological and emotional support for victims of domestic violence, highlighting how physical activity can rebuild self-esteem and agency.
- Regional initiatives using mixed-gender and intergenerational sport to reduce stereotypes and strengthen empathy across groups.

Here is a list and a summary of the good practices identified. Detailed description are available among the annexes:

Leisure Time and Socio-Emotional Development: The Benefits of Sports Activity

Explores how structured leisure sports promote emotional regulation, social interaction, and mental wellbeing, showing that participation in group sport enhances cooperation, motivation, and resilience.

Education through Sports: Myths and Reality
Highlights the gap between the perceived and actual educational potential of sport. The study calls for conscious pedagogical design to ensure that sport genuinely supports SEL rather than reinforcing competitiveness or exclusion.

Sport for the Promotion of Mental Health in Teenagers
Focuses on how physical activity contributes to the prevention of anxiety and depression by strengthening self-esteem, social connectedness, and emotional balance—elements transferable to adult wellbeing programmes.

Sports: A Subversive Tool for Learning
Presents sport as an alternative educational tool capable of reshaping traditional hierarchies, enhancing teamwork, and building social awareness through shared experiences and emotional engagement.

Sports – Educating and Educating
Examines how sport develops responsibility, discipline, and empathy through structured coaching and mentorship, positioning the coach as both educator and role model in SEL development.

Argo Project
An inclusive sports project promoting access for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. It demonstrates how physical activity can be used to strengthen community bonds, self-confidence, and mutual respect through experiential learning.

The identified good practices show that integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into adult education through sport remains a relatively unexplored field. Many of them, while originally developed for youth or general audiences, offer however adaptable models that can be effectively transferred to adult and inclusive contexts.

Survey results
The Italian survey reached 211 participants, including educators, trainers, and vulnerable adults.
Findings show that while most professionals are familiar with the idea that sport supports inclusion and wellbeing, few have formal training on integrating emotional learning into sport-based programmes.

Key results include:

- Over 70% of respondents agreed that sport helps develop self-confidence and teamwork.
- Only 25% reported consciously using SEL strategies (such as emotional reflection or cooperative goal setting) in their work.
- Time, lack of training, and limited resources were cited as the main barriers.

- Vulnerable adults reported improved motivation, emotional control, and sense of belonging when sport activities were inclusive and well-facilitated.

These findings confirm the need for structured training pathways to help educators consciously develop SEL competences through sport.

Expert interview

Two expert interviews were conducted in Italy with professionals offering complementary perspectives on how sport can foster Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and social inclusion among vulnerable adults.

Ramiro Lerda, professional rugby player and coach, and physical education teacher, shared his extensive experience using sport as a tool for inclusion and personal development. Active in several projects promoting social integration through sport, Lerda emphasised that rugby's values (teamwork, respect, discipline, and solidarity) naturally align with SEL principles.
According to him, sport provides a safe and structured environment where individuals can test their limits, learn to trust others, and develop emotional resilience. For vulnerable adults, this experience can be transformative, helping them rediscover confidence, belonging, and purpose.
Lerda underlined that the coach's role as an educator is essential: beyond technical skills, trainers must guide reflection, model empathy, and help participants recognise what they learn on and off the field. He also noted the importance of adaptability and awareness, as emotional learning in sport emerges from the way activities are conducted rather than from the activity itself.

Dr. Giovanni Giacobbe, psychologist, and regional guarantor for animal rights in Sicily, brought an innovative perspective through his work in dog-assisted sports and interspecies psychotherapy. Drawing on over thirty years of experience, he illustrated how interaction with animals supports the development of empathy, emotional regulation, and responsibility. Participants learn to understand and respect another being's signals, building non-verbal communication and self-control.
Giacobbe explained that this approach combines the physical and relational dimensions of sport with the emotional awareness required in human-animal interaction, offering a powerful model for SEL in inclusive settings. He stressed the need for educators to receive psychologically grounded training that integrates sport science, comparative psychology, and emotional facilitation skills to maximise social and emotional outcomes.

Both experts agreed that sport's educational potential depends on intentional design, guided reflection, and emotionally competent facilitation. Their experiences, from the rugby field to animal-assisted activities, demonstrate that when sport is approached consciously, it becomes a powerful tool for self-awareness, empathy, and inclusion.

Focus group

The focus group gathered sport professionals and educators working with vulnerable adults. Participants discussed their daily experiences and the challenges of merging sport with emotional and social goals.
They recognised that sport provides a natural context for teamwork and empathy but pointed out that trainers often lack the tools to transform spontaneous interactions into structured learning.

Discussions revealed three recurring needs:

- Practical tools and examples to apply SEL through sport;
- Shared language between educators and sport professionals;
- Spaces for reflection and peer learning to consolidate competences.

The group also reflected on gender dynamics, motivation, and the balance between rules and freedom in sport as a learning environment.

Key insights

The research conducted in Italy, by Consorzio Tartaruga and ENDAS, revealed a vibrant context where sport is widely recognised as a tool for personal and social development, yet the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles remains largely informal and intuitive. Both practitioners and educators demonstrate motivation and openness to SEL but express a strong need for structured training and practical guidance. Specifically:

- Low awareness of SEL frameworks, particularly among younger professionals and sport instructors, was observed. Many participants in the Consorzio Tartaruga cohort associated SEL with general wellbeing or teamwork rather than a specific competence model.
- Despite limited formal knowledge, many practitioners already apply SEL-related strategies—such as empathy-building, communication, and emotional regulation—intuitively, without linking them to a clear methodology.
- The survey and focus group confirmed high training needs across all five SEL competencies, with particular interest in learning practical facilitation tools and methods for structured reflection with participants.
- The focus group discussions highlighted a strong demand for case-based and experiential training, addressing real situations like conflict management, inclusion of mixed-ability groups, and emotional awareness in sport environments.

Overall, Italian professionals view sport as a powerful educational space but seek a common framework to connect practice, reflection, and emotional growth.

3.2. Greece

Literature review

The Greek literature review highlights a growing integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within education and community development, though its application in adult education through sport remains limited. National strategies on lifelong learning and inclusion acknowledge SEL as a key competence for employability and civic engagement, yet structured frameworks are still emerging.

The third sector—NGOs, social enterprises, and community initiatives—plays a leading role in advancing SEL through non-formal education and social inclusion projects. These efforts align with EU guidelines on key competences and lifelong learning, often supported by Erasmus+ initiatives. While formal adult education rarely includes SEL, sports and physical activities are increasingly recognised as tools for empathy-building, teamwork, and resilience.

Good practices

Although SEL through sport in adult education is an emerging field, three Greek practices stand out for their innovative approach and adaptability:

Sports as Rehabilitation for Young Offenders
A government-led initiative using structured sports programmes to prevent youth crime and promote reintegration. Activities develop teamwork, discipline, and emotional regulation while fostering inclusion and equality.

Reintegration through Sports (RTS+) Project
A European project coordinated by KETHEA, promoting experiential learning through sport in addiction recovery. It provides a comprehensive toolkit ("Empower+") to train professionals and support participants' mental health, resilience, and life skills.

Drosostalida's 3rd Age Active Citizenship Programme
A local initiative engaging adults aged 65+ in intergenerational activities that enhance decision-making, communication, empathy, and collaboration through walking groups, music, and social workshops.

These examples confirm that SEL principles are adaptable across age groups and social contexts.

Survey results
The Greek survey reached 72 professionals (adult educators, social workers, sport trainers, psychologists) and 30 vulnerable adults.
While 55% of professionals are familiar with SEL, only a minority apply it systematically in their work. About 43% cited a lack of training as the main obstacle. Most professionals are eager to learn how to combine sports and SEL, favouring hands-on and reflective learning methods—particularly team-based, outdoor, and inclusive activities.
Vulnerable adults, mostly unemployed or in recovery, confirmed that sport supports emotional regulation, social connection, and confidence. However, they face barriers such as economic constraints, health issues, and limited access to opportunities.

Expert interview
Ioannis Petsanis, educator and coordinator at Kinoniko EKAV, emphasised that self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills are essential for educators working with vulnerable adults. He advocates for experiential, sport-based learning, mentorship, and real-life reflection exercises as the most effective SEL training methods. His testimony highlights the need for practical, inclusive, and adaptable training resources that reflect diverse adult learners' realities.

Focus group
The focus group in Greece involved professionals from education, sports, and the social sector. Participants discussed the intuitive use of SEL principles in their work, despite lacking formal frameworks. They called for case-based training, exchange of good practices, and guidelines on integrating SEL into sports. The discussion underlined the importance of adapting tools to local realities and using sport as a bridge for empathy and empowerment.

Key insights

The findings of the research conducted in Greece by Drosostalida show an ecosystem rich in informal SEL practices but in need of structure, training, and policy support.

- SEL through sport is recognised as highly effective but still underdeveloped.
- Professionals apply SEL intuitively and seek structured, hands-on frameworks.
- Training needs are high in all SEL areas, especially emotional regulation and conflict management.
- Vulnerable adults express strong motivation to participate in sport-based inclusion activities when barriers are reduced.

Overall, Greece demonstrates that the link between SEL and sport is fertile ground for innovation.

3.3. Spain

Literature review

Spain shows mature use of SEL in schools, but far less in adult education. Third-sector organisations bridge this gap through non-formal, experiential programmes that link physical activity with wellbeing, resilience, and inclusion. Evidence stresses the need for structured frameworks, trained facilitators, and evaluation tools to turn intuitive practice into intentional SEL learning for adults.

Good practices

Three applied models illustrate SEL-through-sport with vulnerable adults:

Proyecto Hombre (Therapeutic Community)
Volleyball and strength training, with planned reflection and peer support; gains in self-management, inclusion, and communication.

Hospital Sant Rafael (Psychiatric Units & PHP)
Mixed conditioning, cooperative games, and brief emotion check-ins; strengthens self-awareness, social awareness, and effort regulation.

Wellness (Barcelona reintegration group)
3 weekly sessions + outdoor challenges; goal setting, routine, and transfer to daily life; boosts confidence and social bonds.

These initiatives demonstrate the pedagogical potential of sport when supported by intentional reflection and emotional facilitation. They are also aligned with broader Spanish frameworks such as Sport2Live's "Mental-Fit" methodology and the FC Barcelona Foundation's "SportNet" programme, which both integrate sport, psychology, and inclusion principles in community and recovery contexts (see Annex n. 12).

Survey results

From 52 professional responses, profiles were diverse (coaches, social educators, therapists). Knowledge of SEL was mixed (≈36% "yes", 32% "somewhat", 32% "no"), yet 67% reported already using related ideas in sessions. Top barriers: participant reluctance (50%) and lack of training (45.5%). Across competencies, practitioners preferred hands-on approaches—

mindfulness and cool-down reflection (Self-awareness), role switching and team tasks (Social awareness), case studies for Decision-making, routines and post-activity debriefs (Self-management), and trust-building team design (Relationship skills). 74% did not know existing SEL good practices, underscoring a visibility gap.

Expert interview

The practitioner interviewed emphasised self-awareness (realistic, compassionate self-image), relationship skills (for reintegration), and self-management/decision-making via goal-setting and progressive challenges. Effective training for professionals should blend sport-specific SEL theory, mentoring, peer exchange, and interdisciplinary collaboration with therapists/educators to ensure transfer to daily life. Outdoor group challenges were highlighted for motivation, bonding, and resilience.

Focus group

Six practitioners (coaches, mental-health nurse, social integrator) reported intuitive SEL use but asked for structured, case-based training, shared frameworks, and interdisciplinary teamwork (sport–health–social). Reported challenges: limited time per session, balancing therapy vs. enjoyment, and managing conflict/emotional crises; strategies included negotiated challenges, quick de-escalation, and coordination with clinical staff. Desired resources: real-case videos, guides, communities of practice, and blended learning formats.

Key insights

The research conducted in Spain by Sport2Live confirmed that sport represents a powerful yet underused avenue for developing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competences among adults, especially those facing social vulnerability. Professionals in the sector widely recognise its educational and therapeutic potential, but often lack structured frameworks and resources to guide practice. The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- SEL is well developed in schools but under-systematised in adult contexts, with third-sector organisations leading most innovation.
- Practitioners favour practical, reflective, and interdisciplinary approaches, and express the need for greater visibility of good practices and a shared methodological language.
- Strong alignment was observed between sports routines combined with reflective activities and improvements in self-management, self- and social awareness, and relationship skills, particularly in addiction recovery and mental health settings.

Overall, the Spanish experience demonstrates that when sport is approached intentionally it becomes a transformative tool for personal growth and social reintegration.

3.4. Romania

Literature review

The Romanian literature review shows that the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within adult education and sport is still in an early stage of development. National education strategies and academic studies increasingly recognise the importance of emotional intelligence, communication, and teamwork, yet these are rarely applied systematically in sport-based

programmes for adults. Most research and interventions linking SEL and sport focus on children and adolescents, leaving a gap in the adult education sector.

However, the review also reveals a growing awareness among educators and NGOs of the value of combining physical activity with emotional learning. Emerging projects emphasise the role of sport in fostering inclusion, resilience, and wellbeing, particularly among vulnerable groups such as unemployed adults, migrants, and persons with disabilities. Scholars underline that to make this connection effective, programmes must include structured reflection, trained facilitators, and contextualised learning outcomes, transforming sport from a recreational tool into a deliberate educational practice for social and emotional growth.

Good practices

In Romania, structured programmes directly combining sport and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) are still rare. However, several initiatives demonstrate how physical activity and group-based learning can effectively foster inclusion, empathy, and personal development, especially among vulnerable youth and adults. The following examples highlight emerging practices that could serve as models for adaptation within the Edu4Impact framework:

"Move for Health" (Terre des Hommes Romania)

A psychosocial intervention combining sports, movement, and emotional expression to support children and young people affected by migration or poverty. Activities are designed to help participants regulate emotions, build trust, and strengthen social bonds.

"Sport for All" (UNICEF Romania)

A community-based project encouraging inclusive participation in sport across genders and abilities. It promotes equal access to physical activity while nurturing cooperation, communication, and respect for diversity.

Teach for Romania – Leadership through Movement

Integrates physical activity into teaching practices to foster self-awareness, motivation, and teamwork among both educators and learners. The initiative strengthens educators' capacity to apply SEL concepts through play and experiential learning.

These initiatives confirm that, while explicit SEL frameworks are not yet widespread, many Romanian organisations intuitively employ sport as a tool for emotional development and social cohesion. Their experiences underline the need for systematisation and professional training, ensuring that SEL principles become an intentional and measurable component of adult education through sport.

Survey results

The Romanian survey reached a total of 104 respondents, including adult educators, sport professionals, and representatives of vulnerable groups (unemployed adults, migrants, and people with disabilities). The survey sought to assess the level of awareness, application, and perceived benefits of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within sport and adult education settings.

Results revealed that only around one-third of professionals were familiar with the concept of SEL, although the majority unknowingly applied related practices, such as teamwork, empathy-building, and emotional regulation exercises. Respondents demonstrated high motivation to learn more, especially through practical, experience-based training rather than theoretical instruction.

Among the five SEL competences, self-awareness and relationship skills were rated as most relevant to their work, while responsible decision-making and self-management were identified as areas where further guidance and structured methods were needed.

When asked about training preferences, participants favoured:

- Workshops combining physical activity with reflection and group discussion;
- Real-life case studies and peer exchange;
- Short, modular learning formats adaptable to their professional routines.

The survey also revealed that professionals perceived sport as a powerful vehicle for inclusion, but cited significant barriers: lack of funding, insufficient facilities, and low institutional support. Vulnerable adults highlighted the psychological and social benefits of participation—increased self-esteem, motivation, and social belonging—but reported obstacles such as transportation, costs, and low accessibility of sport programmes.

Overall, the data indicates that SEL through sport is highly valued but underdeveloped in Romania. There is a strong demand for training, guidance, and structured educational models, exactly the kind of support the Edu4Impact project seeks to provide.

Expert interview

The Romanian interview was conducted with Despina Maria Ilinca Iorga, an adult educator and sport facilitator experienced in community inclusion projects for vulnerable adults and youth. The expert emphasised that while sport is widely used for social activation and confidence building, its emotional and educational potential remains underutilised due to the lack of structured methodologies linking sport to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

According to the interviewee, the greatest challenge in working with vulnerable adults is fostering motivation, trust, and emotional stability. Many participants struggle with self-doubt or fear of failure, which can only be addressed through empathetic facilitation and a safe, supportive group atmosphere. Sport, when guided consciously, offers a dynamic environment where participants can explore and strengthen these emotional dimensions.

The expert also pointed out that SEL-oriented sport programmes should balance physical challenge and emotional reflection. Activities that involve cooperation, shared goals, and immediate feedback allow participants to practice self-control, empathy, and communication in real time. The role of the facilitator is crucial, not as a coach in the traditional sense, but as an emotional guide who helps participants connect the physical experience to broader life skills such as decision-making, resilience, and teamwork.

Finally, the interview underlined the need for specialised training for educators and sport professionals, equipping them with both technical and psychosocial tools to integrate SEL principles into their daily practice. The expert concluded that Romania needs a national framework connecting sport, education, and wellbeing.

Focus group

The Romanian focus group gathered six professionals from the fields of adult education, sport instruction, and social work, all of whom had experience working with vulnerable adults, including unemployed individuals, migrants, and people with disabilities. The discussion explored how Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) could be integrated into sport-based activities to enhance inclusion and personal development.

Participants agreed that while they already promote values such as cooperation, respect, and empathy through sport, they rarely do so within an explicit SEL framework. For most, emotional learning happens intuitively, as a by-product of teamwork, conflict, or shared achievement. However, there was unanimous recognition of the need to systematise these experiences into intentional training models supported by reflection, feedback, and facilitation tools.

Several key themes emerged:

- Gender and cultural stereotypes still influence participation in sport and the perception of certain activities as “male” or “female.”
- Emotional safety was highlighted as a precondition for effective learning; participants must feel accepted before engaging in competitive or challenging exercises.
- Professionals called for clear methodologies and structured frameworks that help them connect physical practice with emotional and social objectives.
- The group valued the idea of training cases and real-life scenarios, which could provide guidance and practical examples for educators and coaches.

The focus group concluded that SEL through sport offers immense potential for both personal growth and community cohesion in Romania.

Key insights

The Romanian research, coordinated by Sorangeli, revealed that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) through sport remains a nascent and underexplored field, with most initiatives emerging from NGOs rather than public institutions. Despite this, there is strong motivation among professionals to learn and apply SEL principles in adult and community education contexts.

The main findings can be summarised as follows:

- Low SEL awareness: Most professionals were only slightly familiar with SEL concepts, though many intuitively incorporated related practices into their activities.
- High motivation and training needs: Respondents showed great interest in acquiring structured knowledge and practical methods to integrate SEL into sport-based interventions.

- NGO leadership: Organisations such as Terre des Hommes, UNICEF, and Teach for Romania play a pioneering role in combining sport, inclusion, and emotional education, but their efforts remain fragmented and small-scale.
- Barriers and social perceptions: The focus group highlighted persistent gender stereotypes, limited infrastructure, financial barriers, and parental reluctance as significant challenges to participation in sport.
- Training priorities: Professionals expressed demand for tools related to mindfulness, emotional regulation, goal setting, conflict management, and inclusive sport activities adaptable to various groups.

Overall, Romania presents a fragmented but promising landscape. There is growing recognition of the social and emotional value of sport, yet mainstream adoption requires targeted professional training, public awareness campaigns, and stronger institutional support.

4. Comparative Analysis

This chapter provides a comparative analysis of the national research carried out in Italy, Greece, Spain, and Romania. It highlights common patterns across the four contexts, notable differences, and specific gaps where one country's findings address issues absent in the others. This analysis forms the basis for the Edu4Impact educational programme design.

4.1. Common patterns across countries

- High motivation to integrate sport and SEL, but low levels of formal training across all four countries.
- Practitioners frequently apply SEL-related practices intuitively, without framing them as SEL.
- Team sports, outdoor activities, and low-equipment exercises are the most commonly preferred modalities.
- Training priorities are consistent: stress/self-management, self-awareness, decision-making, and relationship skills.
- Barriers are recurrent: participant reluctance, weak institutional backing, limited visibility of good practices, and structural obstacles such as cost, logistics, or access to facilities.

4.2. Differences and country-specific aspects

- SEL Familiarity: Greece shows higher familiarity; Spain has strong addiction/clinical practices; Italy reveals wide gaps; Romania shows overall low familiarity.
- Institutional Ecosystem: Greece has policy-linked pilots (justice sector); Spain has mature methodologies with interdisciplinary links; Italy offers two complementary lenses (sports system and third-sector); Romania relies on NGO-led pilots without mainstreaming.
- Barriers: Romania emphasizes infrastructure and gender stereotypes; Greece highlights security/logistics in justice settings; Spain faces time/logistical constraints; Italy stresses the training gap.

4.3. Gaps and blind spots in research/practice

- Greece is the only country to survey both professionals and vulnerable adults.
- Greece provides outcome data from justice-sector pilots (young offenders) with evidence of reduced reoffending.
- Spain uniquely documents SEL integration in clinical and psychiatric contexts.
- Romania provides detailed evidence of gender stereotypes and early dropout from sports.
- Italy benefits from two-partner perspectives, offering a dual lens on sports and social/third-sector approaches.

4.4. Lessons learned at transnational level

Across all four participating countries, the Edu4Impact research confirms that sport is a powerful yet underutilised channel for developing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in adult education and inclusion work. Despite contextual differences, the findings converge on several key lessons.

First, SEL awareness remains low, but intuitive practice is widespread. Many professionals already nurture empathy, self-control, and cooperation through sport without formal frameworks. This indicates strong potential for capacity building and upskilling, rather than starting from zero.

Second, there is a universal need for structured methodologies and adaptable tools that translate SEL theory into sport-based action. Professionals call for case studies, experiential modules, and reflective facilitation techniques—elements now central to the Edu4Impact Training Plan.

Third, collaboration between sectors (sport, education, health, and social inclusion) is essential. The most effective initiatives are those connecting coaches, educators, and psychologists, showing that SEL thrives where multiple expertise areas meet.

Finally, the transnational comparison highlights the importance of context-sensitive adaptation. While Greece leads in policy-linked pilots, Spain in clinical practice, Italy in dual-sector experience, and Romania in community-led innovation, each contributes unique insights that enrich the shared European framework.

Comparative Table

Dimension	Italy	Greece	Spain	Romania
SEL familiarity	Low in Tartaruga, mixed in ENDAS; many act without naming SEL.	Higher familiarity & usage; also surveyed vulnerable adults.	Mixed familiarity; confident practice in addictions/clinical contexts.	Low familiarity; strong demand for concrete tools.
Who was surveyed	Professionals (n=211 across two partners).	Professionals (n=72) + vulnerable adults (n=30).	Professionals (≈50).	Professionals (n=50).
Preferred modalities	Team & outdoor activities; low equipment.	Team/outdoor + experiential methods.	Team/outdoor + clinical routines.	Outdoor (75%), team (55%), individual (49%).
Barriers	Major training gap; low SEL awareness.	Institutional/security constraints; participant distrust.	Time/logistics in clinical settings; need shared method.	Infrastructure/access; gender stereotypes; parental attitudes.
Training needs	Case-based SEL across all 5 domains.	Stress management, empathy, decision-making; toolkits & peer exchange.	Self-management, reflection, conflict resolution; coach-ready scripts.	Mindfulness, inclusive games, goal-setting, conflict resolution.
Good practices maturity	Youth-focused literature; adult adaptation needed.	Justice, addiction, 65+ initiatives; policy-linked pilots.	Strong addiction/psychiatric cases; club foundations.	NGO pilots (refugees, inclusive dance); little mainstreaming.
Institutional support	Fragmented; dual-lens (sports vs. third-sector).	Strong; e.g. Ministries' offender program, pilots to rollout.	Interdisciplinary links (coach-therapist-educator).	Weak; need campaigns, funding, better infrastructure.
Visibility of practices	Moderate; adult-sector curation needed.	Present via NGO/policy pilots.	Low awareness among professionals (~74% unaware).	Very low awareness (86% unaware).

5. From Research to Action – The Training Plan

The Edu4Impact project aims to translates the findings of the research phase into the basis for a structured educational pathway that combines sport and Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL). It will provide trainers, educators, and sport professionals with a practical framework to develop and strengthen SEL competences through experience-based activities.

Grounded in non-formal education and experiential learning, the Training Plan outlines five Training Areas corresponding to the five SEL competences and presents ten Training Cases, two for each area, that turn theory into practice. Together, they form a coherent and adaptable base for a programme that supports adult educators and sport trainers in promoting inclusion, emotional growth, and wellbeing among vulnerable adults through the power of sport.

5.1. Methodological Framework

The Edu4Impact Training Plan was developed based on a wide and participatory research process carried out in the four partner countries: Italy, Greece, Spain, and Romania. Partners conducted surveys, interviews, focus groups among the target groups (adult educators and vulnerable adults) along with research of good practices and literature reviews to explore how sport and physical activity can be used to enhance Socio-Emotional (SEL) competences in adult education of both educators and vulnerable adults, to foster social inclusion of the latter.

Through this research, educators, sport professionals, and experts highlighted a strong need for structured, experience-based approaches that help both trainers and learners strengthen skills such as empathy, self-regulation, collaboration, and responsible decision-making. These insights guided the definition of five Training Areas, each focused on one specific SEL competence and how this can be enhanced through sports. On these five Training Areas partners developed ten Training Cases (two per training area): practical experience-based activities that make up the foundation of the present Edu4Impact Training Plan.

In the development of the Training Area, the consortium applied a methodology grounded in non-formal and experiential learning, where participants learn by doing, reflecting, and applying new skills, engaging learners as active participants, instead of passive receivers of information. The educational approach is based on the facilitation of direct experience through sports, followed by dialogue and reflection activities encouraging participants to transfer the insight gained during the activities in daily life.

5.2. Definition of the Training Areas

Building on the results of the research conducted, the Edu4Impact Training Plan identifies five Training Areas. Each area corresponds directly to one of the five SEL (Social Emotional Learning) competences and is tailored to the needs expressed by sport trainers and adult educators involved by the consortium in the research across partner countries. The Training Areas provide the conceptual and practical foundation for developing concrete educational cases and training materials.

a) Training Area 1 – Self-awareness through sport

This area focuses on enabling educators and trainers to recognise and regulate their own emotions and to guide vulnerable adults in doing the same. Research highlighted strong interest in mindfulness techniques, structured reflection activities, and relaxation exercises. While warm-ups and cool-downs are widely used, they are rarely connected explicitly to emotional awareness. The training will therefore emphasise mindfulness in movement, reflective debriefing, and practical routines for emotional self-check.

Key insights from research: Professionals requested mindfulness techniques, reflection activities, and relaxation exercises. Many already use warm-up/cool-down but lack structured emotional debriefing.
Emphasis: mindfulness in movement, reflection during/after activities, emotional self-check routines.

b) Training Area 2 – Social awareness and inclusion through sport

This area addresses empathy, respect for diversity, and cultural sensitivity in sport-based education. Practitioners stressed the need for inclusive team activities, role-play, and methods to address gender stereotypes and stigma. Particular challenges were noted in mixed-ability groups and in contexts involving migrants, refugees, and survivors of gender-based violence. The training will highlight inclusive sport design, empathy-building games, role-swapping exercises, and strategies for intercultural understanding.

Key insights from research: Demand for inclusive team sports, role-play, intercultural dialogue, and addressing gender stereotypes and stigma (RO, GR). Professionals also stressed working with mixed-ability groups and vulnerable populations (disability, migrants, GBV survivors).
Emphasis: inclusive sport design, empathy-building games, cultural awareness, role-swapping activities.

c) Training Area 3 – Responsible decision-making through sport

This area develops the ability to make ethical and constructive decisions in sport and life contexts. Across countries, practitioners expressed the need for strategy-based activities, leadership roles, and scenario-driven learning. Conflict management and decision-making under pressure were identified as difficult areas. Training will therefore include structured strategy games, leadership rotations, ethical dilemma scenarios, and group debriefing methods to foster critical reflection on choices.

Key insights from research: Practitioners want scenario-based training, strategy games, and leadership roles (all countries, especially ES & GR). Many struggle with conflict management and real-life decision simulations.
Emphasis: strategy-based drills, leadership rotations, ethical dilemmas in team settings, debriefs on group decisions.

d) Training Area 4 – Self-management through sport

This area supports the regulation of emotions, motivation, and stress in order to achieve personal and group goals. Stress management, perseverance, and goal-setting emerged as core needs, particularly in clinical and justice-related contexts. Training will focus on resilience routines, stress-relief practices, perseverance challenges, and personal goal-setting strategies, providing participants with tools to cope with adversity and maintain engagement.

Key insights from research: Consistent call for stress management, goal setting, perseverance training, routines for resilience (all countries). Spain's addiction/clinical contexts and Greece's justice sector highlight this as critical.
Emphasis: stress-relief practices, personal goal setting, perseverance challenges, resilience routines.

e) Training Area 5 – Relationship skills through sport

This area focuses on building healthy relationships, communication skills, and the capacity to manage conflict. Practitioners across all countries identified teamwork, trust-building, and conflict resolution as priorities. Although many already work on cooperation, they lack structured SEL frameworks to do so intentionally. Training will therefore prioritise cooperative sport activities, peer coaching, trust-building exercises, structured feedback routines, and role-play for conflict resolution, enabling participants to practise and internalise positive relational skills.

Key insights from research: All countries stressed conflict resolution, cooperation, trust-building, and peer feedback. Italy's and Spain's focus groups noted that many already foster teamwork but lack structured SEL tools to do it intentionally.
Emphasis: cooperative sports, peer coaching, trust-building games, structured feedback exchanges, role-play for conflict management.

Table overview: The 5 Training Areas

Training Area	Description
🧘 Self-awareness through Sport	Recognising and regulating emotions through mindfulness in movement, reflective debriefing, and emotional self-check routines.
🤝 Social awareness and Inclusion through Sport	Building empathy and respect for diversity via inclusive activities, role-swapping games, and intercultural understanding strategies.
🎯 Responsible decision-making through Sport	Fostering ethical choices and leadership using strategy games, ethical dilemmas, and group decision-making reflections.
💪 Self-Management through Sport	Enhancing resilience, stress management, goal-setting, and perseverance through structured routines and challenges.
🗣️ Relationship skills through Sport	Strengthening teamwork, trust, communication, and conflict resolution via cooperative sports and structured peer feedback.

5.3. Introducing Training Cases

The Training Cases are practical learning activities that lay the foundation of the curriculum and learning modules that will be developed in the second part of the project. These combine sport-based activities with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles. Each case presents a practical scenario adapted from real-life sport or training situations, through which participants can explore, practice, and internalize specific SEL competences.
The Training Cases use sport as a pedagogical tool for reflection, awareness, and growth, creating a bridge between physical experience and emotional understanding.

Each case can be implemented by sport trainers or adult educators working with vulnerable adults in the frame of a structured comprehensive and coherent framework or independently, to foster specific SEL competences, or combined with others to form a full training cycle, depending on the context, time available, and participants' needs.

Each case is designed to:

- Provide structured, hands-on experiences that evoke social and emotional dynamics.
- Encourage reflection and group dialogue to transform experience into learning.
- Support trainers and educators in developing and applying SEL competences in inclusive, sport-related contexts.

The ten Training Cases were designed to develop the five Training Areas previously defined, 2 for each of the Training Area. They constitute the practical backbone of the Training Plan. They translate theoretical competences into lived experiences that can be replicated, adapted, and scaled.

a) Self-awareness through sports

Edu4Impact Training Cases

1.1 Exploring emotions by listening to the body

Training Area

Self-Awareness through sport

Target group

Adult educators and sport trainers working with vulnerable adults

Description

The group will move through four simple stations, each designed to connect movement and mindfulness. The aim is not to perform well or complete the circuit quickly, but to slow down, listen to the body, and notice how emotions and physical sensations are connected. Each station includes a movement task and a guided self-check question.

Expected outcome

- Notice links between body sensations and emotions.
- Practise regulating emotions with mindful movement and reflection.
- Build a short "body check" routine for daily life and use when needed.

Assessment Method

Observation: Are participants pausing, noticing and showing curiosity about their emotions?

Self-reflection scale (1–5):

- I noticed signals from my body linked to emotions.
- I felt able to shift or regulate how I felt.
- I could use a short self-check in daily life.

Group sharing: Key insights written on a flipchart or shared verbally.

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Edu4Impact Training Cases

1.2 From reaction to regulating your response

Training Area

Self-Awareness through sport

Target group

Trainers, educators and vulnerable adults

Description

Participants engage in a series of short physical challenges that introduce mild pressure (speed, coordination, rule changes). After each round, they pause for guided reflection and practise a regulation technique. The aim is not to perform perfectly but to notice the instinctive reaction and apply a calming or balancing strategy. Alternatively, they will receive information on how to conduct this activity when sitting down (in case stress levels are elevated within a room or in a confined area).

Expected outcome

- Identify physical and emotional signals of fight, flight, or freeze.
- Learn and practice simple regulation tools (breathing, grounding, self-talk).
- Experience that stress responses can be observed and managed.
- Transfer regulation techniques to daily stressful situations

Assessment Method

Observation: Are participants noticing stress signals? Do they try regulation strategies?

Self-reflection scale (1–5):

- I noticed when my body shifted into fight/flight/freeze.
- I practised at least one regulation tool (breath, grounding, self-talk).
- I feel more confident about calming myself in stressful situations.

Group discussion: Capture examples of where participants might use these skills in real life.

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b) Social awareness and inclusion through Sport

Edu4Impact Training Cases

2.1 Role-Swapping Game

Training Area

Social Awareness and inclusion through Sport

Target group

sport trainers and adult educators working with vulnerable adults

Description

This activity aims to help participants experience empathy, cooperation, and inclusion by taking on different physical or communicative limitations during a team game.
The facilitator should emphasize that the focus is not on performance or winning, but on understanding how to adapt and support each other.
Participants must work together to complete the game while ensuring that everyone contributes meaningfully.

Expected outcome

Understand other people's difficulties and strengths.
• Increase empathy and non-verbal communication.
• Reflect on the stereotypes and barriers we reproduce without realising it.
• Promote cooperation and inclusion in sporting and social environments.

Assessment Method

Facilitator Observation: the facilitator observes and records key interaction indicators during the activity, such as:

- Whether players help and include teammates with limitations
- How they communicate and adapt to each other
- Signs of empathy, respect, and cooperation.
- Short notes or a simple observation grid (yes/no) can be used to track: active participation, mutual support, listening, and turn-taking.

Participant Self-Assessment – Traffic Light Reflection: At the end of the session, each participant reflects on how they have integrated the target competences (empathy, cooperation, and inclusion) using the traffic light color system.

Group Feedback: After choosing their color, each participant briefly shares one sentence about

- What they have learned about empathy and diversity
- What inclusive behaviors or strategies observed in others

This quick reflection helps participants recognize personal progress, celebrate inclusive actions, and consolidate social awareness as a transferable life skill.

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Edu4Impact Training Cases

2.2 Climbing in Connection

Training Area

Social Awareness and inclusion through Sport

Target group

sport trainers and adult educators working with vulnerable adults

Description

This activity aims to help participants experience empathy, cooperation, and inclusion through a symbolic and physical connection.
The goal is not to be successful or winning, but understanding how to adapt, communicate, and support each other while moving together.

The facilitators (sport trainers and educators) should highlight that success is measured by mutual understanding, trust, and teamwork, not by physical achievement.

Expected outcome

Improve communication and active listening
• Develop mutual trust and respect
• Understand the importance of support and synchronisation in human relationships

Assessment Method

Facilitator Observation: the facilitator observes and records key interaction indicators during the activity, such as:

- Whether players help and include teammates with limitations
- How they communicate and adapt to each other
- Signs of empathy, respect, and cooperation.
- Short notes or a simple observation grid (yes/no) can be used to track: active participation, mutual support, listening, and turn-taking.

Participant Self-Assessment – Traffic Light Reflection: At the end of the session, each participant reflects on how they have integrated the target competences (empathy, cooperation, and inclusion) using the traffic light color system.

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This quick reflection helps participants recognize personal progress, celebrate inclusive actions, and consolidate social awareness as a transferable life skill.

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c) Responsible decision-making through Sport

Edu4Impact Training Cases

3.1 Game of Choices

Training Area

Responsible Decision-Making through Sport

Target group

sport trainers and adult educators working with vulnerable adults

Description

Participants will work in teams to complete a challenge: moving the ball from one side of the field to the other while following specific rules, imposing limitations. At first, they will start playing without time to plan. Later, they will have opportunities to pause, discuss, and agree on a shared strategy.
The facilitator highlights that rules or conditions may change, requiring teams to adapt quickly.
The purpose is not only to complete the task, but also to observe how decisions are made collectively, how team members are included, and how pressure or conflict is managed during the activity.

Expected outcome

By the end of the activity, participants are expected to:

- Strengthen their ability to analyze a situation and agree on a team strategy.
- Develop awareness of how leadership roles influence group decision-making.
- Experience and practice ethical reasoning by balancing efficiency, fairness, and inclusion in decisions.
- Improve their capacity to adapt strategies under pressure or new constraints.
- Build confidence in managing conflict constructively within a team context.

Assessment Method

The facilitator can use a simple observation checklist during the activity, noting:

- Did the team develop and follow a clear strategy?
- Were leadership roles rotated or shared?
- Were all members involved in the decision-making process?
- How did the team react when rules or conditions changed?
- Did conflicts arise, and if so, how were they managed?

Additionally, participants can complete a quick self-assessment scale (1–5) after the activity:

- I felt included in the team's decisions.
- I was able to contribute ideas to the group.
- I understood the reasoning behind the team's strategy.
- I felt comfortable when conflicts or disagreements emerged.

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Edu4Impact Training Cases

3.2 The Path you Choose

Training Area

Responsible Decision-Making through Sport

Target group

sport trainers and adult educators working with vulnerable adults

Description

Participants will move through a course with several checkpoints. They are free to choose the order and route but must visit all checkpoints. Conditions may change and participants will need to adapt their strategy. The aim is not only to complete the course, but to practice making and reviewing decisions under real outdoor conditions, noticing how strategies affect safety, efficiency, and confidence.

Expected outcome

- Apply a plan–act–review routine to individual decisions in dynamic environments.
- Make safe, ethical, and inclusive choices (e.g., honesty at checkpoints, respect for rules and others).
- Improve risk assessment, time/energy management, and adaptation when conditions change.
- Strengthen emotional regulation (staying calm, noticing stress signals) and self-efficacy (owning choices and consequences).

Translate lessons to daily-life decisions (health routines, appointments, job search steps, budgeting, transport).

Assessment Method

The facilitator can observe and note during the activity:

- Did participants set and follow a clear plan?
- Did they adapt their strategy when conditions or rules changed?
- Did they manage their time and energy appropriately?
- Did they make safe and ethical decisions (e.g., respecting boundaries, following rules, being honest at checkpoints)?
- Did they show awareness of stress, fatigue, or risk while deciding?

At the end, participants can complete a short self-reflection scale (1–5):

- I made conscious choices about my route and strategy.
- I was able to adapt when conditions changed.
- I managed my energy and time effectively.
- I stayed calm when I was uncertain or under pressure.
- I would apply a similar plan–act–review approach in real-life situations.

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d) Self-management through Sport

Edu4Impact Training Cases

4.1 The Circle of Respect

Training Area

Self-Management through Sport

Target group

vulnerable adults, adult educators, and sport professionals who wish to strengthen their self-management and leadership skills in experiential settings.

Description

The activity takes place in a safe equestrian space, where participants are invited to work in small groups under the supervision of an equestrian specialist and an SEL facilitator. Each group interacts with a horse through simple tasks that require calmness, clarity, and cooperation, such as guiding the animal through a path or forming a circle together. Participants rotate roles to experience both leadership and support, while the facilitators ensure safety and encourage reflection. The horse acts as a mirror of human behaviour, reacting immediately to tension or calmness, and thus offering powerful feedback on the importance of respect, self-regulation, and responsibility.

Expected outcome

- Strengthen emotional self-regulation under stress.
- Develop a stronger sense of personal responsibility.
- Practice respectful and trust-based leadership.
- Improve communication and empathy (verbal and non-verbal).
- Transfer these skills to real-life personal and social contexts

Assessment Method

Observation Checklist (Facilitator tool)
During the tasks, the facilitator notes behaviours such as:
- Emotional regulation (calmness, stress reactions).
- Clarity of communication (verbal and non-verbal).
- Responsiveness to feedback (from horse, peers, facilitator).
- Leadership style (respectful, directive, inclusive).

Peer Feedback
- After role rotations, peers briefly share one strength and one suggestion for the person in the leadership role.
- Example structure: "I noticed you stayed calm when the horse resisted" / "I suggest trying clearer hand signals next time."

Self-Reflection Card
Participants answer 3–4 quick prompts at the end:
- I felt in control of my emotions: 😊 😐 ☹
- I communicated clearly: ✓ / partly / not really
- One thing I will take with me into daily life is…

Group Debrief Insights
- Facilitators record 2–3 collective takeaways on a flipchart, making learning visible and reinforcing shared responsibility.

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Edu4Impact Training Cases

4.2 The Path of Trust

Training Area

Self-Management Through Sports

Target group

ulnerable adults (especially those facing difficulties in emotional regulation, social anxiety, or reintegration). Trainers and educators seeking tools to foster collaboration and trust-building. Mixed groups.

Description

The activity takes place in a safe, enclosed space where participants are invited to interact with trained dogs through simple trust-building tasks. Each participant or pair is guided step by step by the facilitators, who introduce the importance of calmness, patience, and non-verbal communication when working with the animal. The dogs respond immediately to stress, tension, or inconsistency, which allows participants to reflect on how their inner state influences relationships. Tasks such as guiding the dog along a path, giving basic commands, or completing a cooperative exercise are designed to highlight the role of trust and emotional regulation in successful collaboration. Throughout the activity, roles are alternated so participants can experience both leading and supporting, with structured pauses for reflection led by the facilitators.

Expected outcome

- Improve emotional self-regulation (especially in moments of uncertainty or frustration).
- Strengthen trust and empathy, both towards animals and peers.
- Practice non-verbal communication as a tool for collaboration.
- Experience the balance of leading and supporting in a relationship of care.
- Transfer the skills of calmness, patience, and trust-building to everyday life situations.

Assessment Method

Observation Checklist (Facilitator tool)
During the tasks, the facilitator notes behaviours such as:
- Emotional regulation (calmness, stress reactions).
- Clarity of communication (verbal and non-verbal).
- Responsiveness to feedback (from horse, peers, facilitator).
- Leadership style (respectful, directive, inclusive).

Peer Feedback
- After role rotations, peers briefly share one strength and one suggestion for the person in the leadership role.
- Example structure: "I noticed you stayed calm when the horse resisted" / "I suggest trying clearer hand signals next time."

Self-Reflection Card
Participants answer 3–4 quick prompts at the end:
- I felt in control of my emotions: 😊 😐 ☹
- I communicated clearly: ✓ / partly / not really
- One thing I will take with me into daily life is…

Group Debrief Insights
- Facilitators record 2–3 collective takeaways on a flipchart, making learning visible and reinforcing shared responsibility

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e) Relationship skills through Sport

Edu4Impact Training Cases

5.1 Revisiting gender roles in sports as parents

Training Area

Relationship Skills through Sport

Target group

sport trainers and adult educators working with vulnerable adults, in particular parents who are on any type of social support.

Description

Participants are divided into 2–4 mixed-gender teams. Each team selects a sport or childhood game suitable for all participants and explain its rules and materials. They then present their choice to the others, discussing when and with whom they last played it, its inclusivity, and any gender or age associations. The facilitator guides reflection to identify and gently challenge stereotypes, and observe team decision-making dynamics. All activities are then performed together (around 10 minutes each). If teams struggle to choose, facilitators may offer examples or suggestions.

Expected outcome

- Identify several ideas of activities that can be done by children and parents together, irrespective of gender.
- Build strong, healthy relationships within the family.
- Improve communication between all genders and ages, and between family members and learn to communicate and work towards a common goal.
- Parents will experience first-hand the physical and emotional benefits of sport.
- Parents will create an action plan to integrate sport and relationship skills into their family life.
- Reflect and deconstruct gender stereotypes that sports and physical activities are mostly for boys.
- Become culturally sensitive to Roma population, if we have a mixed group.

Assessment Method

The facilitator can use a simple observation checklist during the activity, noting:

- Were all members involved in the decision-making process?
- What were the main difficulties in identifying all gender, age appropriate activities?
- What stereotypes arose from the discussions and activities and how did they help deconstruct it?

Additionally, participants can complete a quick self-assessment scale (1–5) after the activity:

- I am more aware of gender stereotypes related to sports after participating in this activity. (This assesses awareness of gender biases)
- I feel more confident in my ability to choose sport activities that are inclusive for all family members, regardless of gender. (This gauges confidence in promoting inclusivity)
- I have a better understanding of the benefits of sport for building stronger relationships with my children. (This assesses the understanding of family benefits)
- I am more open to exploring sport activities that challenge traditional gender roles. (This measures willingness to challenge stereotypes)
- I have a clearer plan for integrating sport as a positive and inclusive family activity. (This assesses commitment to action planning)

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Edu4Impact Training Cases

5.2 Team sports - a way to build inclusive relations between migrants and host communities

Training Area

Relationship Skills through Sport

Target group

sport trainers and adult educators working with adults, in particular migrants that are dealing with social exclusion, discrimination or xenophobia.

Description

Participants will be divided into two mixed groups. The two teams should have balanced migrant and locals distribution, to ensure inter-culture dynamics. Each team should participate in a sport activity that can be completed by all the participants. Prior to the activity the facilitators should research the most popular team sport for both migrants and locals. Before the actual activity starts and the rules are explained to ensure a common understanding, the facilitators need to explain the purpose of the game, how they selected the team sport and allow for each member to present him/herself. The end of the game is also dedicated to an in depth discussion about how the game went, what the participants learnt about each other's cultures.

Expected outcome

- Build stronger, healthier relationships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Improve intercultural communication and collaboration skills.
- Develop empathy and inclusivity.
- Deconstruct personal stereotypes and challenge xenophobic attitudes.
- Understand the benefits of sport in building inclusive communities.

Assessment Method

The facilitator can use a structured observation checklist during the activity to track:

- Levels of engagement from all participants
- Instances of inclusive language or behavior
- Attempts to bridge cultural differences
- Effective communication strategies observed
- Evidence of cooperation and teamwork
- Specific sport strategies they used

Additionally, participants can complete a quick self-assessment scale (1–5) after the activity:

1. I feel more comfortable interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds (1-5 scale).
2. I am more aware of my own stereotypes or biases related to migrants (1-5 scale).
3. I can identify effective communication strategies to foster inclusivity (1-5 scale).
4. I am committed to promoting inclusivity (1-5 scale).
5. I can apply what I've learned from the activity (1-5 scale).

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6. Trainer's Guidelines

The Edu4Impact Training Plan is designed to be flexible and adaptable to a variety of training environments, participant profiles, and levels of experience. However, ensuring the right practical setup is essential for the success of each Training Case.

6.1 Practical aspects

Group composition: Training activities are conceived to be most effective in small to medium-sized groups, typically ranging from 6 to 15 participants and may include adult educators and trainers, developing their own SEL competences, vulnerable adults, involved directly in inclusion or empowerment programmes or mixed groups combining both profiles, fostering shared learning and mutual understanding.

Duration and timing: Each Training Case can typically be implemented within 60 to 120 minutes, including time for warm-up, activity, reflection, and debriefing.
When integrated into a larger training programme, cases can be sequenced progressively — beginning with self-awareness and moving toward relationship and teamwork competences. Sessions should be scheduled with adequate breaks and reflection time balancing action and reflection to maintain motivation and focus.

Materials and space: most activities require only basic sport or everyday materials such as balls, cones, ropes, mats, or markers. Flexibility and creativity are encouraged: objects can often be replaced with accessible alternatives.
The training space could be either indoor or outdoor. Some activities are conceived to be conducted outdoors, but alternatives will be given for each Training Case. It is recommended that they will be large enough to allow movement and interaction and accessible for participants with any kind of physical abilities.

6.2 Role of the facilitators and trainers

The Edu4Impact Training Plan is built on collaboration between sport and education professionals, who work together to turn physical activities into opportunities for emotional and social learning. The success of each Training Case depends largely on the facilitator's ability to create an engaging and reflective learning environment.

Facilitators and trainers involved in the Edu4Impact programme will have the chance to combine technical expertise in sport with pedagogical and emotional awareness.
Edu4Impact promotes a **participant-centered approach**, where the facilitator acts not as an instructor, but as a guide and observer who helps participants make sense of their experiences.

Facilitators should balance challenge and support, ensuring that participants feel safe to take emotional and physical risks while maintaining a sense of control and inclusion.

A distinctive feature of the Edu4Impact methodology is the integration of two professional roles, that can be covered by the same person:

- The sport facilitator, who ensures the technical and logistical flow of the activity, introduces the rules, and maintains safety;
- The SEL facilitator, who observes emotional dynamics, proposes reflective questions, and guides the debriefing phase.

This **co-facilitation model** enriches the learning process by connecting the physical and emotional dimensions of the activity. Effective teamwork between facilitators requires clear communication, mutual respect, and a shared understanding of learning objectives.

The facilitator's most important task is to create a psychologically safe and inclusive environment. To achieve this, facilitators are supposed to embody the same SEL competences they wish to teach. This allows to transform the activity into a genuine learning experience, not only for participants, but for themselves as well.

6.3 Expected learning outcomes and assessment methods

The Edu4Impact Training Plan aims to develop five core socio-emotional (SEL) competences through sport and experiential learning. Each Training Area targets a specific dimension of personal and social growth:

Training area	SEL Competence focus	Main expected outcomes
1. Self-awareness	Recognising and understanding one's emotions and reactions	Participants identify emotional triggers, connect body sensations with feelings, and express emotions appropriately.
2. Social awareness	Empathising with others and valuing diversity	Participants develop empathy, active listening, and respect for others' perspectives.
3. Responsible decision-making	Making ethical and constructive choices	Participants learn to analyse situations, consider consequences, and act responsibly.
4. Self-management	Regulating emotions, motivation, and behaviour	Participants practice self-control, persistence, and stress management in dynamic sport settings.
5. Relationship skills	Building and maintaining healthy relationships	Participants improve teamwork, communication, and conflict-resolution skills.

Across all areas, the overarching outcomes are:

- Enhanced emotional intelligence and self-regulation;
- Strengthened social cohesion and group collaboration;
- Increased confidence and inclusion, especially among vulnerable participants;
- Greater awareness of transfer between sport experience and daily life.

Assessment methods

A mix of **qualitative and participatory tools** is recommended, aligned with non-formal learning principles:

Observation and feedback: Facilitators observe participants during activities, noting key behaviours, interactions, and emotional reactions.

- Use simple **observation grids** or checklists linked to SEL indicators.
- Provide **constructive feedback** focusing on effort, cooperation, and emotional regulation.

Self-assessment: Encourage participants to reflect on their learning after each activity.

- Use **reflection cards**, journals, or short written or visual feedback (drawings, keywords, emoji scales).
- Ask simple prompts: *"What did I feel?" "What did I learn?" "What will I take away?"*

Peer feedback: Involve peers in the learning process by facilitating mutual observation and dialogue. After activities, invite participants to share one positive observation about a teammate. This reinforces empathy, recognition, and community learning.

Group reflection: Conclude sessions with collective reflection circles where participants share emotions, lessons, and challenges. The facilitator summarises insights, linking them back to the targeted SEL competences.

Specific assessment tools will be provided at the end of each of the training modules that will be developed in the second phase of the project.

6.4 Sustainability and transferability

The Edu4Impact Training Plan is designed to be sustainable, adaptable, and open to replication across different contexts in sport and adult education.

The Training Cases were intentionally designed to be transferable to a wide variety of learning environments, participant profiles, and sport disciplines. Facilitators can adapt the Training Cases by varying:

- **Group composition** — e.g. educators only, mixed groups, or vulnerable adults;
- **Environment** — indoor gyms, outdoor spaces, or community centres;
- **Activity format** — competitive, cooperative, or reflective variations;
- **Intensity** — adjusting physical demands to participants' abilities;
- **Duration** — shorter sessions for awareness, extended ones for deeper learning.

Edu4Impact encourages trainers and organisations to see the Training Plan not as a fixed manual, but as a **flexible framework**.

- It can be integrated into **existing sport programmes**, **adult education curricula**, or **community inclusion projects**.
- Activities can be used individually for short workshops or combined into full courses covering all five SEL competences.

Digital resources developed in the next phase of the project (e-learning platform and materials) will further support scalability, allowing for blended and self-paced learning.

7. Conclusions

The Edu4Impact Training Plan establishes the framework, structure, and learning pathway connecting the five SEL competences and their corresponding Training Areas. It also integrates the ten Training Cases that translate theory into practice, providing concrete examples of how sport can become a medium for emotional development and social inclusion.

This plan represents the foundation upon which the Edu4Impact Curriculum will be built in the next phase of the project. Through it, the methodological principles and practical activities developed so far will be transformed into complete training modules, educational materials, and digital resources. These tools will enable adult educators and sport professionals to access ready-to-use learning paths that combine sport practice, guided reflection, and emotional awareness.

Ultimately, the Edu4Impact approach aims to strengthen both the SEL competences of professionals and their capacity to cultivate these skills in others, fostering inclusion, wellbeing, and personal growth through the universal language of sport.

In the next stage, this Training Plan will evolve into a comprehensive Curriculum, turning its conceptual elements into tangible learning and assessment instruments—a key step towards making SEL through sport an integral part of adult education across Europe.

8. Annexes

1. Annex 1: Consorzio_Tartaruga_Literature_Review_Good_Practices_and_Interview
2. Annex 2: Consorzio_Tartaruga_Survey_and_Data_Analysis_Italy
3. Annex 3: ENDAS_Literature_Review_Good_Practices_and_Interview
4. Annex 4: ENDAS_Survey_and_Data_Analysis_Italy
5. Annex 5: Italian_Report_Focus_Group
6. Annex 6: Greek_Report_Literature_Review_Good_Practices_and_Interview
7. Annex 7: Drosostalida_Report_Survey_and_Data_Analysis_Greece
8. Annex 8: Greek_Report_Focus_Group
9. Annex 9: Romanian_Literature_Review_Good_Practices_and_Interview
10. Annex 10: Sorangeli_Report_Survey_and_Data_Analysis_Romania
11. Annex 11: Romanian_Report_Focus_Group
12. Annex 12: Spanish_Report_Literature_Review_Good_Practices_and_Interview
13. Annex 13: Sports2Live_Report_Survey_and_Data_Analysis_Spain
14. Annex 14: Spanish_Report_Focus_Group
15. Annex 15: Training Case 1.1
16. Annex 16: Training Case 1.2
17. Annex 17: Training Case 2.1
18. Annex 18: Training Case 2.2
19. Annex 19: Training Case 3.1
20. Annex 20: Training Case 3.2
21. Annex 21: Training Case 4.1
22. Annex 22: Training Case 4.2
23. Annex 23: Training Case 5.1
24. Annex 24: Training Case 5.2

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