

Research on needed competencies to train low skilled adults

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CHAPTER 1

Background

1.1. Education for low skilled adults in Romania

The adult education in Romania is a problematic sector of education, as European Commission shows that “In 2018, nearly 2.3 million people (21.5% of adults) only had low educational attainment. In 2018, only 0.9% of adults aged 25-64 had a recent learning experience (EU average 11.1%). This is particularly concerning given the low number of available jobs requiring only a basic level of education” (Romania - country report, 2020). Continuing the analysis, the same report shows that Romania has issues in acquisition of basic skills at school and limited digital skills in the adult population, both issues representing serious challenges to the participation in labour market. PISA tests showed that Romania has some of the lowest scores in the European Union in terms of mean performance in mathematics, science and reading (OECD, 2019), while early school leaving is still very high (highest in EU, with 15,3%, much higher than the average in EU of 9.7% - Eurostat 2021), both aspects being significant factors of having a higher percentage of low skilled adults in future Romanian society.

Of course, lack of skills (including basic skills) generates low employability, with the European Commission mentioning that out of 100 000 long-term unemployed Romanians, more than 90% can be characterized as “having a low level of employability” especially due to “skills mismatches and lack of basic skills”, while “public employment services are not effectively tailored to individual needs and lack integration with social services, despite substantial funding being available” (Romania - country report, 2020).

According to the national legislation, the adult education in Romania includes compensatory education (a “second chance” route into education for adults who did not obtain the basic level of school qualifications); continuing vocational training; civic education and personal education designed to enable people to play an active role in society (Law of National Education, 2011). Still, second chance education programs that are usually organized by public schools is not necessarily adult education as, according to the law, it is opened to all persons that are more than 4 years older than the expected age for a specific level of education, so second chance

programs are often organized with groups including adults and children (for instance, for primary education in second chance programs, age of participants can vary from 10-11 to 64 years).

Any public or private institutions can provide adult education programs (if it has this role in their status), but only authorized institutions can issue certificates that are acknowledged at national level. Second chance programs can only be organized by institutions accredited by the Ministry of Education (mostly schools) and they are financed by various sources, mostly European funding and projects implemented by educational institutions. Vocational training for adults can only be organized by institutions accredited by the National Authority for Qualifications, and are usually financed by National Agency for employment (Agentia Nationala pentru Ocuparea Fortei de Munca), by employers or from the participants. Civic education and personal development are mostly organized by local or national NGOs, and the number of those educational programs and the interest for participation are very low. Adult education in Romania especially focuses on second chance programs that aims to develop basic skills for adults and on vocational training that allows adult to obtain (another) qualification and skills necessary for a specific job.

In the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2015-2020, Romanian authorities admit that the low participation in adult education in Romania can be explained by the dysfunctionalities in the cooperation between the employers, employees and education and training providers, and those dysfunctionalities lead to an inefficient lifelong learning system. Still, according to this strategy, the main aim was established for 2020 in terms of having at least 10% of adult population (25-64 years old) participating to activities of adult education, and data shows that this objective is far from being reached, with only 4,9% of adult population participating in adult education in 2021 (after rates of around 1% in the previous two years) (Eurostat, 2021 - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Adult_learning_statistics#To_what_extent_did_adults_participate_in_formal_or_non-formal_education_and_training_activities_in_the_last_four_weeks_in_2021.3F).

Literature review could not identify neither a specific definition of “low skilled adults” in Romania nor a specific concern about involving them in adult education or in adapted trainings. Therefore, we can consider international definitions as being applicable in Romania, for instance considering low skilled adults as adults with low educational level (graduated only lower secondary or lower), with low cognitive skills (level 1 or below in literacy or numeracy in PIAAC tests) or low digital skills (OECD, Engaging low-skilled adults in learning, 2019). According to this definition, OECD estimates that “22% of adults across OECD countries have low educational levels and even more adults have low cognitive skills”, but no data are available for Romania.

Also, there is a lack of reliable data regarding the demographics of the low skilled adult population in Romania, but since the Ministry of Education focuses on involving in second chance programs especially the representatives of Roma minority, the adults from rural areas and poor families, we can consider that the authorities have specific data showing that lower skills for adults are to be expected within the Roma communities, in rural and poorer areas of Romania.

Data collected by Eurydice (Adult education and training in Europe, 2021) shows that more than 95% of the Romanian low skilled adults did not search information regarding the learning opportunities in the previous year, but still Romania reports no publicly subsidised awareness-

raising or outreach activities, so only 1.5% of adults report they received free information regarding learning opportunities.

1.2. Education for low skilled adults in Italy

The most common translation for “low skilled adult” in Italy is “adulto scarsamente qualificato” but definitions as “adulto/persona poco/non qualificato/a” and “adulti con bassi livelli di competenze” are also being used when referring to an adult with low literacy skills. To our knowledge, the term “low skilled adult” has started to be widely used in English after the publication of the PIAAC Survey on Adult Skills in 2014.

In Italy, the definition of low skilled adults refers to the Raccomandazione del Consiglio of the 19th December 2016 (2016/C 484/01) where low skilled adults are defined as “adulti con un basso livello di competenze di base (alfabetiche, linguistiche, matematiche e digitali) e trasversali (capacità di lavorare in gruppo, pensiero creativo, imprenditorialità, pensiero critico, capacità di risolvere i problemi o di imparare ad apprendere e alfabetizzazione finanziaria)”.

According to European legislation, the national regulatory reference defines lifelong learning as “Any activity undertaken by people in a formal, non-formal, informal way, in the various stages of life, in order to improve knowledge, skills and competences, from a personal, civic, social and occupational perspective” (law of 28th June 2012, n. 92, art. 4, comma 51). In accordance with this perspective, changes have been introduced with regard to the school context and adult education. Specifically, with the law of 13th July 2015, n. 107, the national education and training system was reformed and some elements have been enhanced with special focus on: prevention and contrast of early school leaving; development of digital skills and enhancement of mathematical-logical skills; fundamental roles of key competences and soft skills to train active citizens able to compete on the current job market.

Regarding Adult education, the Decree of the President of the Republic of 29th October 2012 n. 263 reports the specific reorganization of adult education paths (art. 4, comma 1). New didactic-organizational structures will be created to respond to an increasingly diversified and complex demand for education and training for low skilled adults.

In Italy, according to a research of National Institute for Public Policy Analysis done in 2018 based on data from OECD-PIAAC, there are almost 11 million low skilled citizens in literacy, about 28% of the adult population being aged between 16 and 65. The OECD-PIAAC’s average is 12.7% of low skilled. More than half of the Italian low skilled people are men, a third belongs to the +55 age group. However, 9.6% is represented by youngsters, aged between 16 and 24, and 14% aged between 25 and 34.

In Italy, as in all OECD countries, adults’ participation in education and training activities is correlated with high competence levels. High-skilled individuals participate almost twice as much as low-skilled ones in education and training activities. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the participation rate of Italian adults in training activities is very low compared to what happens in other countries that have participated in PIAAC (Italy 24.3% against the OECD average of 52%).

There is overwhelming evidence that what affects the number of low skilled adults in Italy is also the phenomenon of "Brain Drain" (emigration of individuals who have received advanced training at home): the migration flow of Italians who decide to move abroad also determines a loss of qualified figures. For instance, in 2018, 53% of those who have left have a medium-high qualification and there are about 33.000 high school graduates and 29.000 graduates (ISTAT – "Annuario statistico italiano 2018". Available: <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/12/Asi-2018.pdf>).

Nevertheless, low-skilled adults are a highly heterogeneous population, comprising people with very different characteristics and needs.

The data gathered in the last national permanent census, in 2019, suggests that Italy is the country with the highest percentage of working age adults with only the middle school diploma: 33%. This is a record among all OECD countries. On the basis of the evidence currently available, it is shown how Italy's reputation as a top educated country is at risk.

As in all countries, in Italy also literacy skills of immigrants are lower than those of natives. The OECD average revealed a third of immigrants who are at the lowest levels of competence against 15% of natives; though, in Italy the ratio is 2 to 5: about 40% of immigrants are low-skilled against 25% of natives. The conclusion is that the training offer Italy proposes to migrants, which represents the first necessary step for integration, is very low, considering that Italy have welcomed many more immigrants than other European countries. Eurostat also shows that Italy has the highest European rate of immigrants with a low level of education: 49% (EUROSTAT – Data available in April 2020. Available: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_education).

However, we should not only take into account the category of immigrants but also Italian natives with low socio-cultural backgrounds. From this point of view, the PIAAC research shows that in Italy 86% of the low-skilled adults come from "disadvantaged" family backgrounds and low educational achievement. PIAAC data allow us to define an additional indicator of cultural disadvantage that characterizes low-skilled adults: they come mostly from family contexts with very limited number of books available. This data, verified across all countries, is particularly accentuated in Italy, where 72.6% of low-skilled individuals grew up in a family with less than 25 books available.

Low skilled adults can easily find themselves in a 'low-skill trap'. Many of them have low-level job positions with very limited opportunities for development and they frequently step in and out of unemployment and can often expect limited returns to training, such as higher wages or access to better jobs (OECD, 2017).

The results of the research for Italy also show that medium and highly skilled individuals who have had access to training exceed 56%, while for the low-skilled ones training opportunities are significantly reduced: only 14% of low-skilled Italians have, in some way, benefited from training in a reference period of 12 months. Either way, low-skilled adults, in addition to the fact that they are participating in training activities in a much lower percentage than individuals with high skills, are also those who express to a lesser extent the desire and willingness to take part in education and / or training activities. Another problem adults may encounter is linked to the

necessity of skill recognition. In some cases access to training courses require a recognized certificate.

A system of adult education has been running in Italy since 1997, organised at Local Permanent Centres (*Centri territoriali permanenti – CTPs*) and through evening courses at upper secondary education institutions. In 2007, a specific Ministerial Decree has launched the reform of the adult education system that started in 2012 and ended in school year 2015/2016. The reform has also provided for the establishment of Provincial Centres for School Education for Adults (*Centri provinciali per l'istruzione degli adulti – CPIAs*) that, together with upper secondary schools for the second level courses, have replaced the existing CTPs and evening courses respectively.

The *CPIAs* are autonomous education institutions organized in local networks. They have the same degree of autonomy as mainstream schools, meaning that they have their own premises, staff and governing bodies. Courses provided by *CPIAs* are open to people aged 16 and above (people aged 15 can participate in exceptional circumstances). *CPIAs* provide programs corresponding to initial education up to the completion of compulsory education as well as language courses for immigrants.

The system of 'school education for adults' offers:

- ❑ first-level courses, organized by *CPIAs*, aimed at obtaining a first-cycle qualification and the certification of basic competences to be acquired at the end of compulsory education in vocational and technical education;
- ❑ second-level courses, organized by upper secondary schools, aimed at the obtainment of a technical, vocational and artistic school leaving certificate;
- ❑ literacy and Italian language courses for foreign adults, organized by *CPIAs*, aimed at the acquisition of competences in the Italian language at least at the level A2 of CEFR.

In addition, a course to acquire the basic primary education competences is available for learners who lack of certification attesting the completion of a primary education level.

The system falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. This type of provision is financed through public resources and it is free for participants.

Additionally, in order to meet the training needs of low-skilled adults and especially migrants and Roma population in Italy, many Vocational Training Centres accredited by every Region organize specific vocational training courses. Regional authorities create lines of intervention based on the European Programmes available and the specific need of the territory with programmatic tools developed to allocate resources. Once the need for a specific profession is revealed, Calls for Proposal are being published and authorized and accredited Training Centres present their projects.

In Italy, training centres refer to the National Qualification Repertory, created in response to the diversity of qualifications and fragmentation of the national system. In addition, to deal with emergencies such as migration, associations and cooperatives (mainly NGO's) can also use funding to provide useful basic education for a first integration out of the national repertory.

Experienced trainers involved in this kind of projects often benefit from specific training for trainers programs. Depending of the type of Call for Proposals sometimes the training for trainers contribute to the empowerment of adult educators with knowledge and skills necessary for greater involvement of low-skilled and low-qualified people into lifelong education through effective outreach, guidance and motivation.

1.3. Education for low skills adults in Germany

In Germany, the term "low-skilled" refers to people with a low level of education or no school-leaving qualifications, as well as people whose foreign qualifications are not recognized or who have not obtained a certificate for their professional skills. These people can acquire so-called basic skills in programs and courses offered by different providers, which qualify them for everyday work and help them in their private lives. Adults are also being referred to as "low skilled" if they have never made a career connection or their employment careers have been interrupted by frequent unemployment. This can also include people with refugee or migration experience who's vocational or university degrees from their country of origin are not (yet) recognized in Germany. The "low-skilled" group is significantly underrepresented in continuing education.

Adult education centres (Volkshochschule, VHS) offer basic education programs. These include arithmetic, reading and writing. In addition, some VHS also offer the opportunity to obtain school-leaving qualifications. Courses are offered, for example, at the VHS in Bochum, Flensburg, Hamburg and many more. On the VHS website www.Grundbildung.de there is a wide range of training courses and for adult educators and training concepts as well as a selection of teaching concepts and materials for adult basic education.

In addition to courses, many adult education centres also offer outreach to self-help groups for people with low literacy levels. PC learning cafés, where participants can learn on their own free of charge using offerings such as the website www.vhs-lernportal.de, are also offered. Basic education courses are usually offered on favourable terms, and most are free of charge.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung) supports international basic education programs, e.g. of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband).

The federal states also offer courses in their own basic education centers. In Baden-Württemberg, for example, there are the basic education centres "Grundbildungszentrum Ortenau", and the "Grund-Bildungs-Zentrum Berlin". The courses offered also deal with teaching reading and writing skills. In addition, there are typically a variety of low-threshold offerings, such as film evenings, workshops, action days or learning cafés, which take place in neighborhood or family centers or as part of excursions. Basic education centers (Grundbildungszentrum, GBZ) as well as regional basic education centres (regionals Grundbildungszentrum, RGZ) are financed by the respective federal state and can therefore provide their services mostly free of charge.

Some of the RGZ offer intensive courses in cooperation with job centres that promote basic skills in dealing with money, as well as pre-vocational courses or learning cafés in which participants

can learn how to use computers and perform writing, reading and arithmetic tasks free of charge using the platform ich-will-lernen.de.

In addition to the state-organized adult education centres and basic education centres, there are registered associations that want to teach people skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

These include the Berlin-based association “Lesen+Schreiben e.V.”, which offers teaching materials for teachers as well as information about its various projects on its website. The content includes basic skills in reading and writing, improving the corresponding competencies, learning on the computer and practicing basic arithmetic. Learners work together in groups, but practice at their own pace and receive pedagogical support. There is also an exchange of learners and alumni at the monthly “Komm-Café” meeting. A further offer, which is aimed at people with reading and writing difficulties, is the weekly writing workshop, where a group meets to write small texts.

The projects are state-funded and therefore free of charge and are open for entry at any time.

Overarching initiatives list the services offered by different providers. In Berlin, for example, the “Alphabündnis Neukölln” provides contacts to the various offers in the Neukölln district. The website of the Alphabündnis lists courses and counseling centers for different basic requirements and needs groups. Interested parties can thus find low-threshold offers for basic education. The Federal Association for Literacy and Basic Education (Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung e.V.), based in Münster, carries out projects that provide those affected with knowledge of the numerous basic education offers and itself carries out research in the field of literacy work.

CHAPTER 2

Research methodology

2.1. Context

This research was conducted in the context of well-known lack of participation of low skilled adults in education, as OECD (Getting Skills Right. Engaging low-skilled adults in learning, 2019) concluded that “adults with low skills are less than half as likely to participate in adult learning as those with higher skills”.

Therefore, it becomes essential to find specific and efficient ways to integrate low skilled adults in education and to promote lifelong learning, and a potential way to do this is to analyse the training methodology and trainers’ skills that can enhance the process of involving adults in education and, equally important, to maintain them in education.

2.2. Objectives

The main objective of this research is to identify the most relevant skills that trainers working with low skilled adults need, in order to create a training methodology to train those trainers, if this will be considered relevant by or respondents.

Adjacent objectives are:

- ☐ to investigate the necessity of specific trainings for trainers working with low skilled adults;
- ☐ to analyse the relevance of adapting or creating a specific methodology for training the low skilled adults;
- ☐ to establish the most important goals of trainers working with low skilled adults.

2.3. Research design

2.3.1. Independent variables

The analyse was conducted in a cross-cultural paradigm, so the most important independent variable is the country; we also took into consideration the respondent status (adult trainer, teacher in second chance education, other educational experts) and the experience of respondents in working with low skilled adults (less than 5 years and more than 5 years).

2.3.2. Dependent variables

According to the research objectives, we focused in the analysis on 3 dependent variables:

1. methodology for training the low skilled adults, operationalized through 3 dimensions:

- ☐ perceived need for an adapted methodology to work with low skilled adults;
- ☐ perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities;
- ☐ perceived learning potential for low skilled adults.

2. trainers for low skilled adults, operationalized through 2 dimensions:

- ☐ perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults;
- ☐ perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults.

3. specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults, 19 potential skills being evaluated by our respondents:

- ☐ collaboration and communication skills, teamwork abilities
- ☐ empathy and respect for others needs and opinions
- ☐ adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults
- ☐ self-evaluation skills and ability to observe and objectively evaluate its own activity
- ☐ valuing diversity and respect the differences
- ☐ multitasking skills (managing simultaneous activities for different skills of different target groups etc.)
- ☐ emotional intelligence and stress management skills
- ☐ critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities
- ☐ scheduling and time management skills
- ☐ patience and self-control
- ☐ conflict resolution skills
- ☐ active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs
- ☐ ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn
- ☐ ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities
- ☐ ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed.
- ☐ digital skills and abilities to integrate new technologies in training activities
- ☐ adaptability to specific interests of different target groups
- ☐ democratic attitude and human rights values to foster self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-belief in learners' progress
- ☐ ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, especially the low skilled adults

2.4. Questionnaire

The research was done using an online questionnaire, as presented in appendix 1. The questionnaire was translated in the national language (Romanian, German, Italian) and respondents answered in their national language.

Reliability of the questionnaire was analysed using the alpha-Cronbach reliability coefficient; for the cross-cultural analysis (taking into consideration respondents from all 3 countries), alpha was 0,961, reflecting an optimal reliability of the scale.

2.5. Subjects

A total sample of 336 respondents was investigated: adult trainers, teachers in second chance programs, other educational experts (psychologist, manager of adult training institutions, researcher, representatives of NGO etc.), with less or more experience in working with low skilled adults, from Romania, Italy and Germany.

As shown in figure 1, most of the respondents don't declare themselves as trainers or teachers, but as other educational experts; still, the number of respondents declaring they have experience as adult trainers or teachers in second chance programs is high enough to make comparisons possible and the investigation of their options relevant.

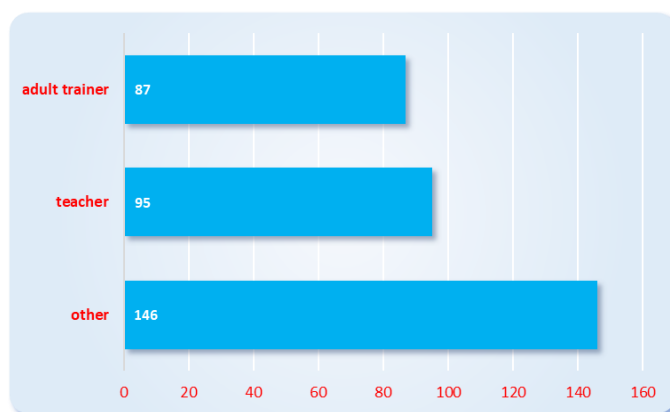


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents according to their status

As the cut-off point for the distribution of answers regarding the experience in working with low skilled adults was the median (5 years), the two groups determined have more or less similar number of participants, as shows in figure 2:

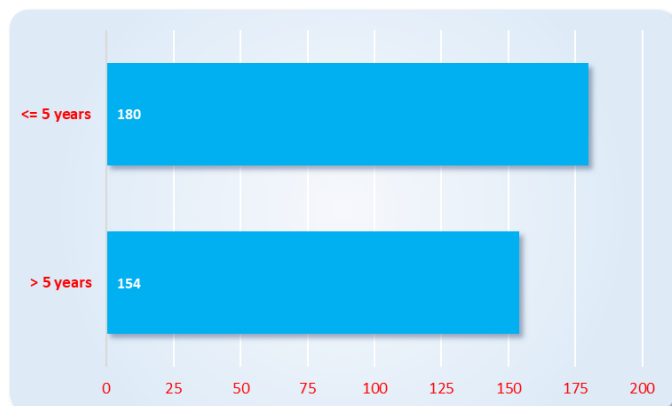


Figure 2. Distribution of respondent according to their educational experience

When considering the country, as shown in figure 3, there are less participants in the German group, but still enough participants from each country in order to make the cross-countries analysis relevant:

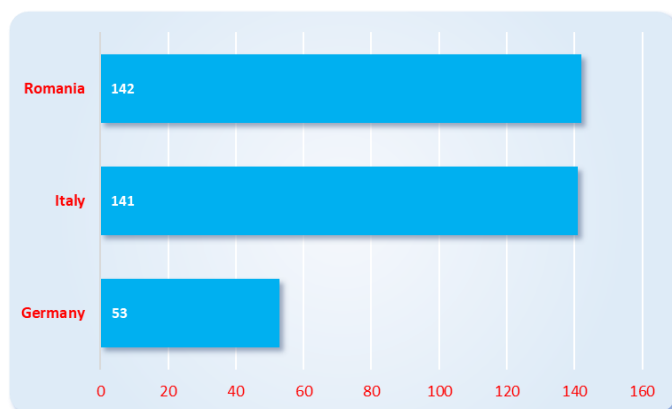


Figure 3. Distribution of respondent across countries

Figure 4 presents the number of participants according to the country and status; in Romania, teachers in second chance programs are the biggest group; in Italy, most of the respondents are other educational specialist, while in Germany adult trainers are predominant.

This distribution of participants reflects the specific of adult training in each country: in Romania, adult education is less developed with the exception of second chance education (activities organized by schools for adults that did not graduate primary or lower secondary education), no most of the respondents are teachers in second chance programs. On the other hand, in Germany and Italy, the main focus is on developing adult skills through direct involvement in educational programs, so most of the German and Italian respondents declare themselves as adult trainers and the number of teachers is very low in our samples.

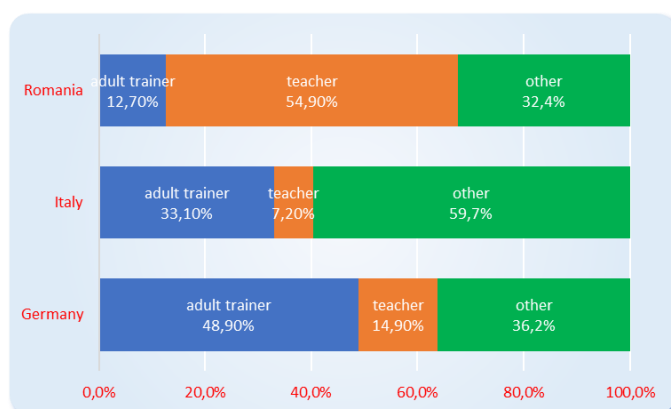


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents across countries according to their status

In terms of specific experience in working with low skilled adults, as presented in figure 5, there are also minor variations between countries; while in Romania the less experienced trainers represent almost 3/4 of the sample, in Italy and Germany there is a tendency of more experienced trainers to be predominant. That difference in the sample reflects the “experience” of adult training in different countries: while in Romania the adult education is a relatively new preoccupation and lifelong learning is relatively new, with education focusing on that only in the last 10-15 years, in Italy and Germany adult education is well established and trainers working in this field are more experienced.



Figure 5. Distribution of respondents across countries according to their experience

CHAPTER 3

Research data and results

3.1. Training methodology for low skilled adults

In this section we will present the data regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology to work with low skilled adults, the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities and perceived learning potential for low skilled adults, with comparative analysis done between countries and according to status and experience.

3.1.1. Perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults

As presented in figure 6, almost all respondents consider that the usual methodology for adult training cannot be used effectively to train the low skilled adults, with more than half of the respondents considering that training for low skilled adults need to be organized with a specific methodology and more than one quarter considering that adapting the usual methodology is needed and sufficient.

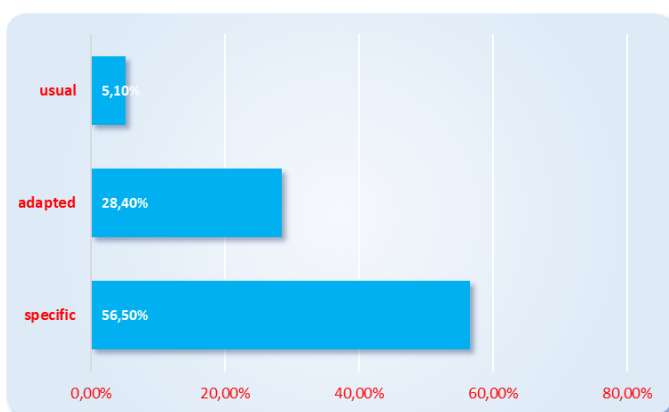


Figure 6. Distribution of answers regarding the methodology to be used when working with low skilled adults

x

This specific evaluation is more or less similar in all investigated countries, as data in figure 7 shows:



Figure 7. Distribution of answers regarding the methodology to be used when working with low skilled adults – cross countries analysis

x

This specific evaluation is more or less similar for all categories of respondents, data in figure 8 showing only one specific difference: for teachers, adapting the usual methodology is less relevant and they focus more on using a specific methodology (probably because, as teachers, their usual methodology is more relevant to school education and its more difficult to adapt).

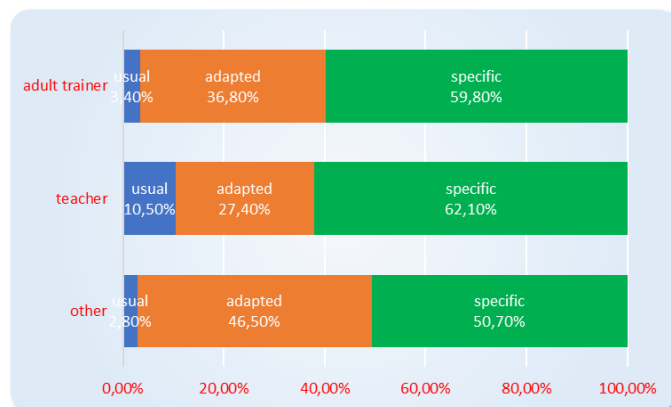


Figure 8. Distribution of answers regarding the methodology to be used when working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Experience in adult training has no visible impact on the perceived needed methodology, as less experienced and more experienced specialists have similar evaluation, as shown in figure 9:

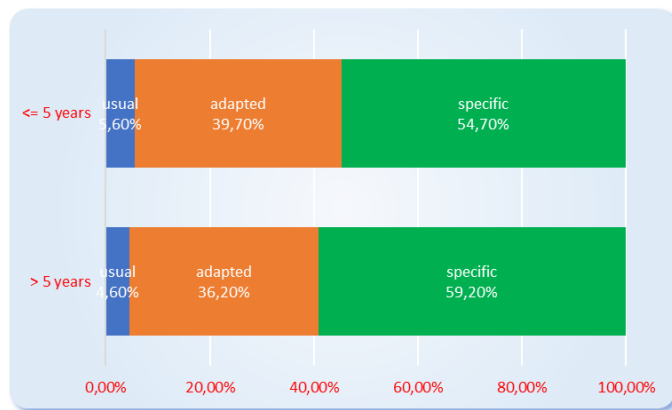


Figure 9. Distribution of answers regarding the methodology to be used when working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that training the low skilled adults requires at least the adaptation of the adult training methodology, but it is preferable to use a specific methodology; anyway, trainings with usual methodology are perceived as inefficient in all three countries, by all three categories of staff and irrespective of their training experience.

3.1.2. Perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities

As shown in figure 10, most of the respondents (around 3/4) consider that low skilled adults can learn best if they participate in adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults, while only 1/4 of the respondents considering that low skilled adults should be integrated in usual training, with trainers giving them extra attention and inviting them to adapted activities.

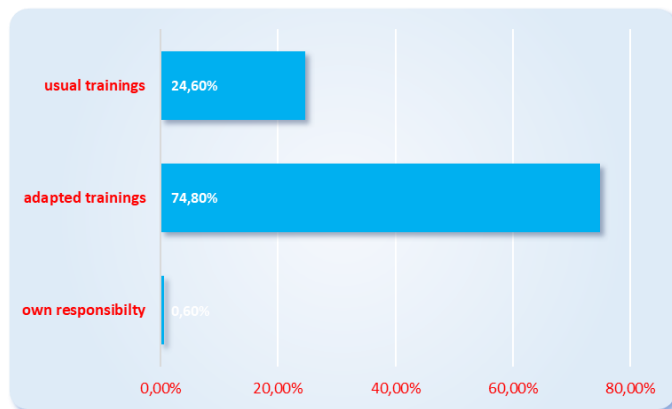


Figure 10. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities

The positive side of the answers presented in figure 10 is that almost no adult trainers consider that “should be responsible for developing their limited skills, and no specific training activities should be organized for them”, therefore admitting that the responsibility for organizing

effective learning activities for low skilled adults are at least shared between training institutions and potential beneficiaries.

x

Data in figure 11 shows that the responses are more or less similar in Romania, Italy and Germany, with respondents considering that the best way for low skilled adults to learn is to organize adapted trainings especially for them, using an adapted methodology.

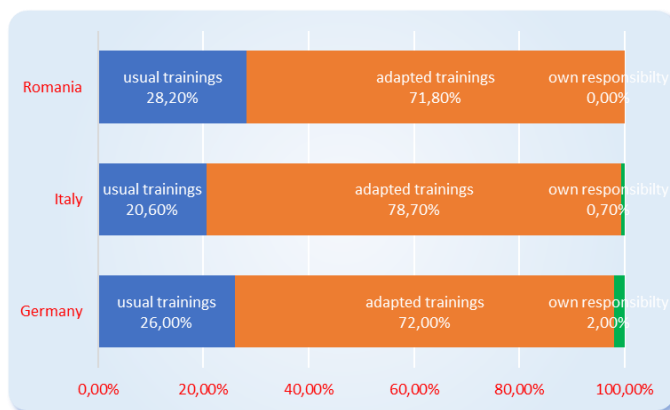


Figure 11. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – cross countries analysis

x

Data in figure 12 shows that all three categories of adult education experts agreed that adapted training designed especially for low skilled adults are the best way for them to learn.

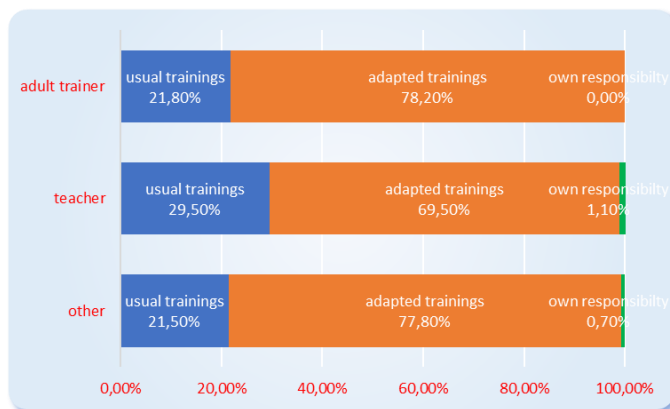


Figure 12. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by status

x

Regarding the influence of experience on this topic, data in figure 13 shows that more experienced specialists are more aware of the need of organizing adapted trainings for low skilled adults.

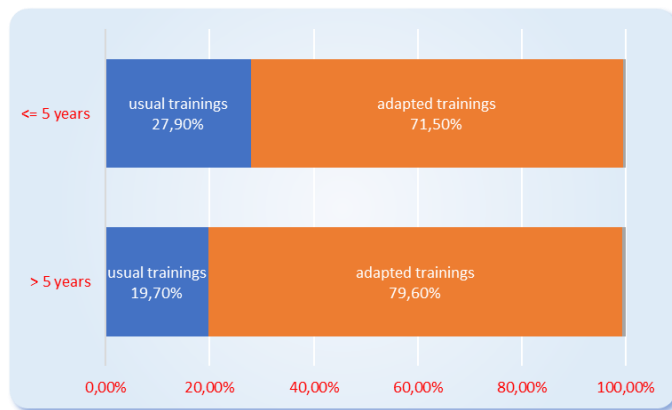


Figure 13. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our respondents consider that the best way for low skilled adults to learn is to involve them in adapted training organized especially for them, and this attitude is irrespective of country, status and experience in working with low skilled adults.

3.1.3. Perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults

Regarding the potential of learning in case of low skilled adults, as data in figure 14 shows, 92% of our respondents agree that this category of adults can learn, with half of the respondents considering that low skilled adults can learn as effective as any other adults, given the adequate methodology and more than 40% considering that low skilled adults can learn in some measure, if the trainer uses effective methods.

Less than 1 out of 10 respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn in a limited measure, even if the trainer uses the most effective methods, while none of the respondents agree that cannot learn even if the trainer uses the most effective methods.

This data underlines the fact that adult education experts agree that learning is possible for low skilled adults, but is dependent on an adequate methodology.

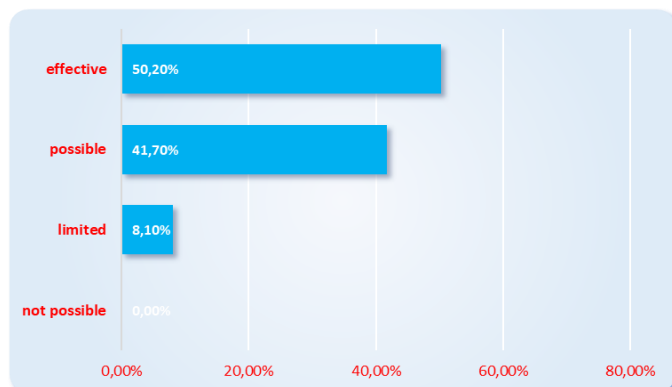


Figure 14. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived potential learning of low skilled adults

x

Cross countries analysis presented in figure 15 shows that the evaluation of learning potential of low skilled adults is different in the investigated countries: the most positive evaluation is in Italy, where most of the respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn as effective as other learners given the adequate methodology, while in Germany most of the respondents consider that learning is possible with adequate methods (but less respondents considers it to be effective); also, Germany has the highest percentage of specialists considering that low skilled adults can only learn in a limited measure, irrespective of the methodology used.

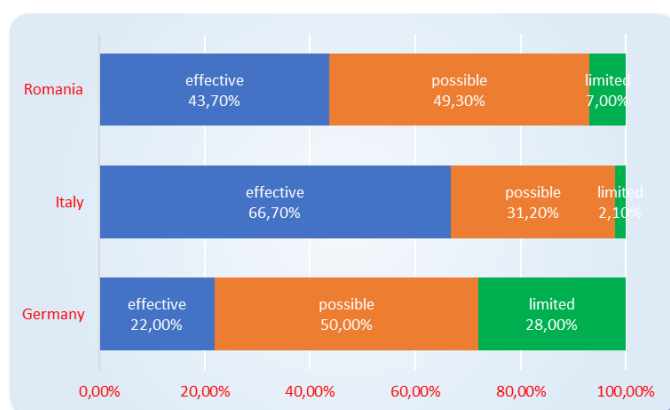


Figure 15. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived potential learning of low skilled adults – cross countries analysis

x

Adult trainers, teachers in second chance programs and other experts in adult education have similar evaluation of the learning potential of low skilled adults, as data in figure 16 shows. Still, adult trainers seem to have more trust in learning potential of low skilled adults, having the highest percentage of answers reflecting that they can learn as effective as any other adults given the right methodology.

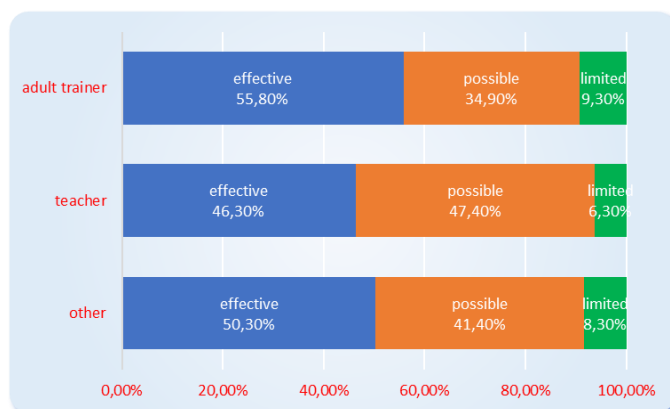


Figure 16. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived potential learning of low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Experience influences the evaluation of the learning potential of low skilled adults: the percentage of respondents considering that those adults can learn as effective as all others is higher for more experienced specialists, while the percentage of respondents considering that learning potential of low skilled adults is limited is higher for the less experienced specialists.



Figure 17. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived potential learning of low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our respondents consider that learning in case of low skilled adults is possible and can be as effective as for other adults given the adequate methodology. None of our respondents considers that low skilled adults cannot learn even if effective methods are provided for them.

The potential of learning for low skilled adults is evaluated in a more positive manner in Italy, while in Germany a quarter of the respondents consider that low skilled adults can only learn in a limited measure.

Adult trainers, especially those with a bigger experience have more trust in the potential of learning for low skilled adults.

3.2. Trainers for low skilled adults

In this section we will present the data regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults and perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults. with comparative analysis done between countries and according to status and experience.

3.2.1. Perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults

Data in figure 18 shows that trainers working with low skilled adults need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults, with around 80% of our respondents agreeing with this statement.

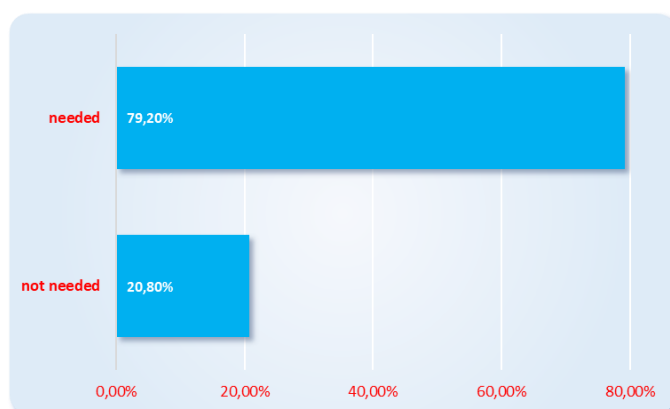


Figure 18. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults

The lower percentage of experts in adult education agreeing that trainers working with low skilled adults don't need specific skills, as any experienced trainer can adapt its methodology for effective trainings for low skilled adults, proves that our respondents are well aware of the difficulties in working with low skilled adults and they feel the need of specific training in order to better respond to the specific needs of this specific target group.

x

Comparing the responds from Romania and Italy (due to a technical difficulty, no reliable data was collected from Germany for this question), data presented in figure 19, we can observe that specific training for working with low skilled adults is considered needed in both countries.



Figure 19. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – cross countries analysis

x

Specific training for working with low skilled adults is considered necessary by all three categories of staff, but, as data in figure 20 shows, teachers in second chance programs and other experts agree with the need of specific training in a bigger proportion compared with adult trainers. Probably, this difference is due to the fact that more adult trainers had this kind of specific trainings compared with teachers and other educational experts.

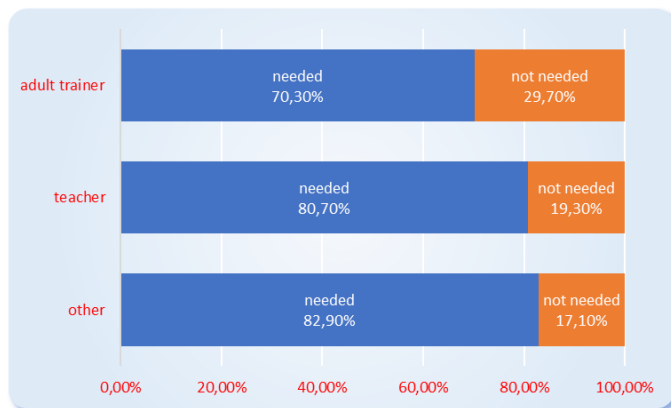


Figure 20. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

Still, the difference is not very big, as all three categories of staff considering that specific training is needed when working with low skilled adults.

✕

There is no significant influence of experience on the perceived need of specific training for working with low skilled adults, as data in figure 21 shows:

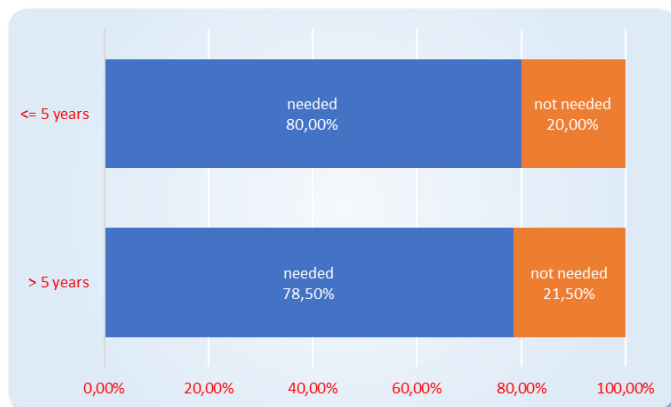


Figure 21. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults need specific training in order to provide quality services for this category of adults, with this attitude being more present for teachers and other experts, but irrespective of the country and level of experience.

3.2.2. Perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults

Our questionnaire asked the respondents to select the most important goals of trainers working with low skilled adults from a list of 8 potential objectives:

- ☐ to adapt the content so that low skilled adults could understand it;
- ☐ to create a positive learning environment so low skilled adults can feel secure and encouraged to learn;
- ☐ to motivate the low skilled adults to learn and involve themselves in learning;
- ☐ to create learning scenarios that can ensure success even for low skilled adults;
- ☐ to adapt their training methodology to actively involve low skilled adults in training activities;
- ☐ to adapt their evaluation tools and strategy to the learning potential of low skilled adults;
- ☐ to realize detailed analysis of needs in order to plan the activities that best respond to the specific needs of low skilled adults;
- ☐ to encourage the feed-back from low skilled adults in order to further adapt their methodology according to the reached results.

Answers from our respondents (that could select as many objectives as they considered important) allow us to create an “image” of what trainers working with low skilled adults should focus on.

As data in figure 22 shows, our respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus more on creating a positive learning environment, on motivating the low skilled adults to learn, on adapting the content to the beneficiary’s potential of learning and on encouraging the feed-back so they could better adapt to beneficiaries needs (with all those four options being considered relevant by at least half of the respondents).

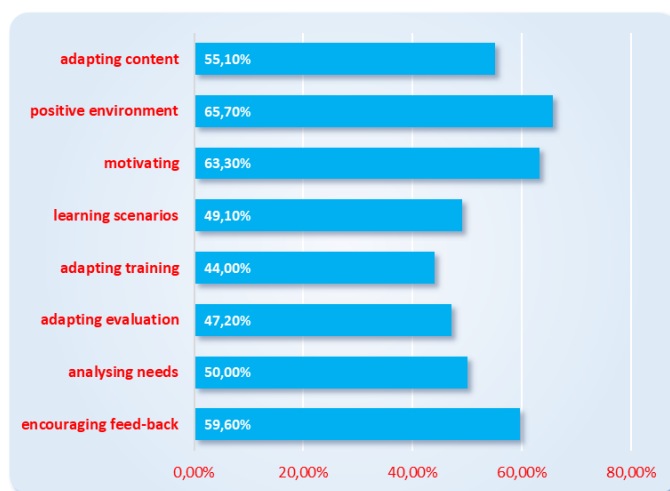


Figure 22. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults

According to those data, we can consider that the most important role of trainers working with low skilled adults is to motivate them for learning, through adapting the contents so they could understand it, creating a positive learning environment so adults feel comfortable and secure, encouraging the participants to provide feed-back so the trainers could better understand their needs.

x

As data in figure 23 shows for Romania and Italy (data was not collected in Germany), there are some specific differences:

□ in Romania, the respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus more on adapting the content, creating a positive environment, encouraging feed-back, motivating learners and adapting the evaluation, while in Italy respondents pay more attention to motivating the learners, creating a positive environment, analysing the needs and encouraging feed-back.

□ significant differences appear on adapting the content, adapting the evaluation and encouraging feed-back (the percentage of respondents selecting those aspects is higher in Romania compared with Italy), but also on analysing the needs and adapting the training (for those aspects, the percentage of specialists selecting them is bigger in Italy compared with Romania).

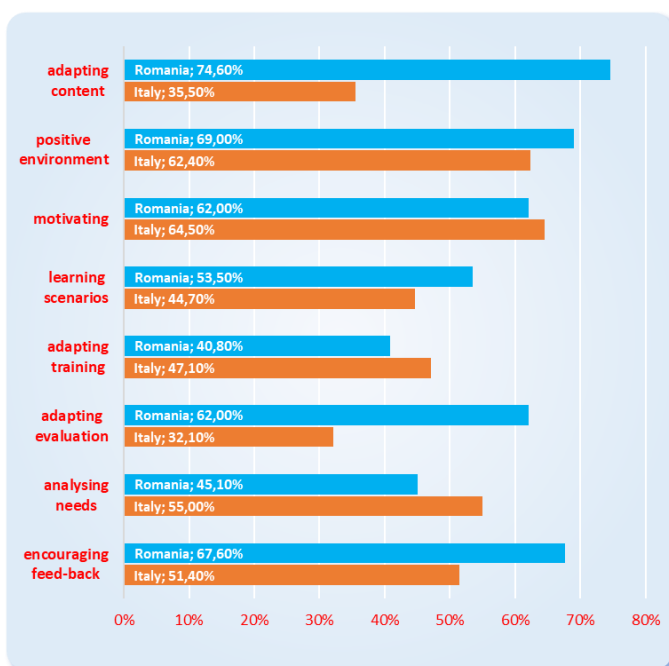


Figure 23. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – cross countries analysis

The cross countries analysis shows that in Romania the trainers focus more on adapting the content and the evaluation, while in Italy there is more focus on analysing the specific needs of low skilled learners and adapting the training.

x

Analysing the influence of status on the perceived most important goals of trainers working with low skilled adults, data presented in figure 24 shows that trainers and other educational experts made similar evaluation, while teachers paid more attention to adapting the content, motivating the learners, adapting evaluation and encouraging feed-back.

Nevertheless, two aspects are most important for all three categories of experts: trainers, teachers and other experts agree that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus mainly on motivating them for learning and creating a positive learning environment so all adults that want to learn can feel secure and encouraged to learn.

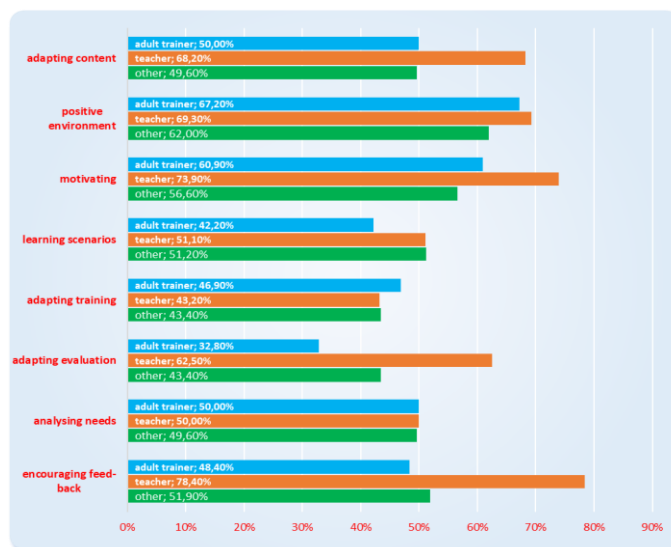


Figure 24. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Analysing the impact of experience on the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults, data shown in figure 25 suggest that less experienced and more experienced specialists share a common perception, with the exception that creating a positive environment and adapting evaluation are more important for less experienced specialists, while analysis of needs is more important for experienced specialists.

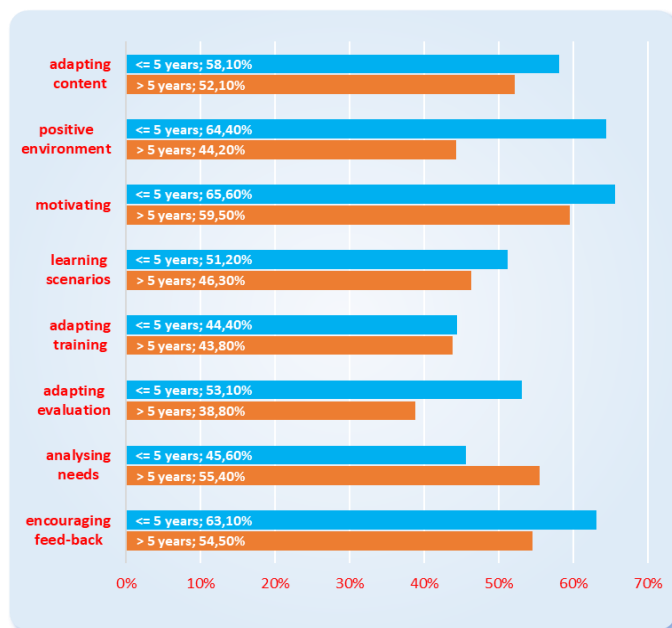


Figure 25. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus mainly on motivating them for learning through adapting the contents, creating a positive learning environment, encouraging the participants to provide feed-back.

Romanian trainers focus more on adapting the content and the evaluation, while Italian ones focus on analysing the specific needs of low skilled learners and adapting the training.

Teachers that work with adults should focus more on adapting the content, motivating the learners, adapting evaluation and encouraging feed-back.

Less experienced specialists focus more on creating a positive environment and adapting the evaluation, while more experienced specialists focus more on the analysis of needs.

3.3. Specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults

In this section we will present the data regarding the perceived specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults, with comparative analysis done between countries and according to status and experience.

x

Figure 26 shows the average evaluation (on a scale from 1- unimportant to 5-very important) for the 19 analysed skills that could be needed for trainers working with low skilled adults:

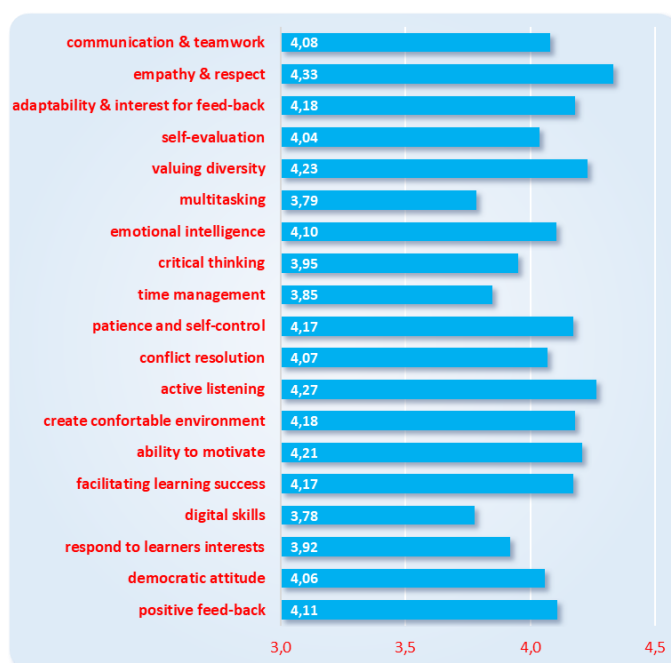


Figure 26. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults

Analysing the data from figure 26 shows that all the proposed skills are considered to be important or very important, with average evaluation between 3,79 and 4,33 on a scale from 1 to 5.

Nevertheless, our objective was to identify the most important skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults, so we will select the skills with the higher average evaluations:

❑ a group of 4 skills have the most positive evaluation (above 4,2): empathy and respect for others needs and opinions, active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs, valuing diversity and respect the differences, ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities;

❑ a group of 6 skills have a positive evaluation (between 4,1 and 4,2): adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults, ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn, patience and self-control, ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed, ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, especially the low skilled adults, emotional intelligence and stress management skills.

x

The cross countries analysis (figure 27) shows similar evaluation done by respondents from Romania, Italy and Germany, with a general tendency of the Italian and German respondents to make more positive evaluations compared with the Romania ones (for all evaluated dimensions).

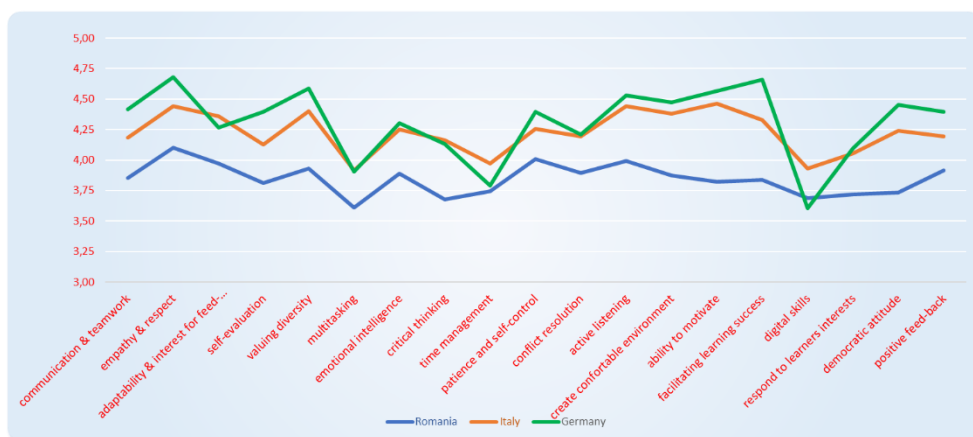


Figure 27. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – cross countries analysis

There is one significant exception: the German respondents, that on average made the most positive evaluations, consider the digital skills as being less important compared with the Italian and Romanian respondents; one possible explanation of this difference is that digital skills are a common topic of adult training in Germany, so German specialists might have better digital skills compared with the Italian and Romanian ones, so they focus less on this aspect; our research data cannot validate this explanation as we don't have information about trainers digital skills in the analysed countries, so we can only speculate on this explanation and we expect future research to validate our hypothesis.

✕

The influence of status on the perceived needed skills of trainers working with low skilled adults, presented in figure 28, is significant and coherent: for almost all analysed skills, the adult trainers have a more positive evaluation, while the teachers in second chance programs and other adult educational experts have similar and more moderate evaluations.

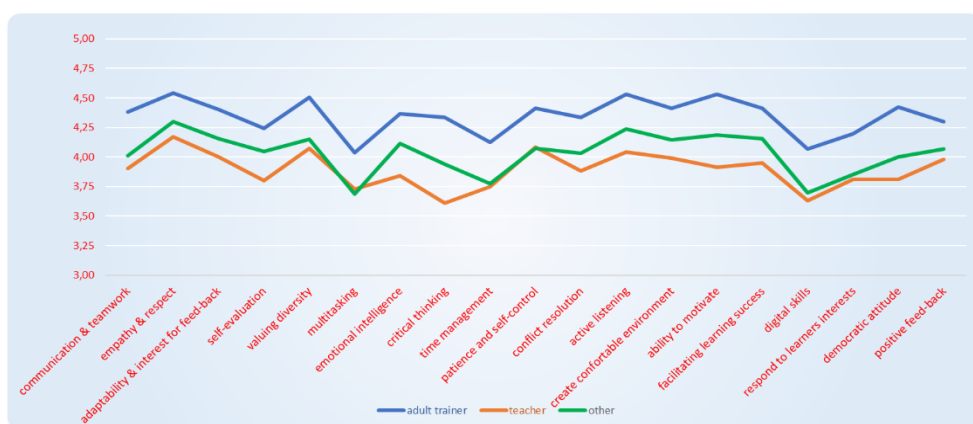


Figure 28. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

Trainers working with adults are more aware of the skills needed to work with low skilled adults, therefore they consider each and every skill to be more important compared with teachers and other educational experts.

x

Experience in working with low skilled adults also has a significant influence on the evaluation of the needed skills to provide training for those adults, with the less experienced specialists considering most of the skills as being more important compared with the experienced specialists, as shown in figure 29:



Figure 29. Distribution of answers regarding the perceived skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults:

❑ must be trained to develop their empathy and respect for others, their active listening skills, their ability to value diversity and respect the differences, their ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities;

❑ should be trained to develop their adaptability and interest for feedback, their ability to create a comfortable learning environment, their patience and self-control, their ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed, their ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, their emotional intelligence and stress management skills.

These skills are considered most important in all three countries and irrespective of respondents' status and experience, so trainings for trainers working with low skilled adults should focus on the development of this set of specific skills.

CHAPTER 4

Research data and results in Romania

4.1. The Romanian sample

The Romanian sample consisted in 142 respondents; as shown in figure 30, most of them are teachers in second chance programs (more than half), but there are also enough adult trainers and other educational specialist to make comparisons possible; still, the low number of adult trainers in the sample imposes precautions in interpreting the potential differences involving this specific group.

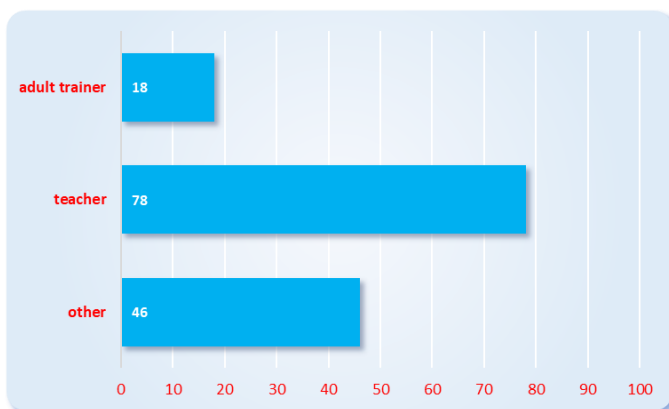


Figure 30. Distribution of the respondents in the Romanian sample according to status

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Figure 31 shows that most of the respondents in the Romanian sample are less experienced specialists (almost 3/4), but there are enough experienced specialists in the sample in order to make the comparisons possible and relevant and to identify the impact of experience on the dependent variables in the Romanian sample.

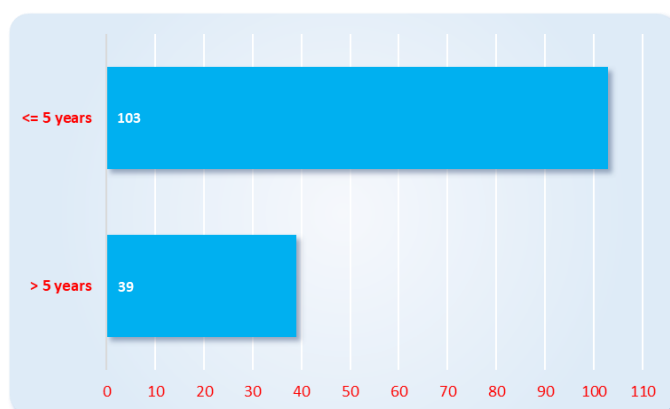


Figure 31. Distribution of the respondents in the Romanian sample according to experience

4.2. Training methodology for low skilled adults

4.2.1. Perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – Romania

As presented in figure 32, almost all Romanian respondents consider that the usual methodology for adult training cannot be used effectively to train the low skilled adults, with almost half of the respondents considering that training for low skilled adults need to be organized with a specific methodology and almost half considering that adapting the usual methodology is needed and sufficient.

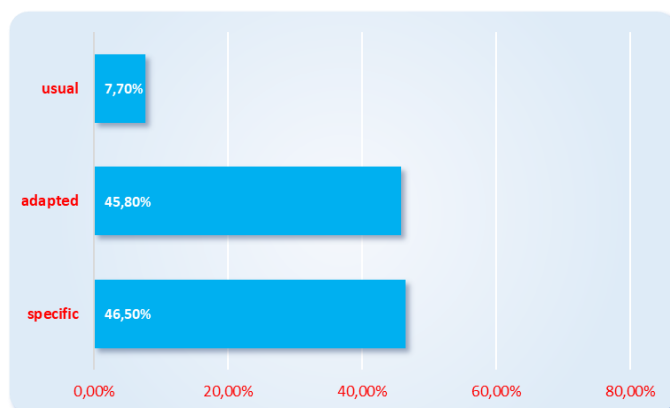


Figure 32. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults

x

Analysing the answers from the Romanian sample according to the status, data presented in figure 33, we can observe that adult trainers and other specialist focus more on an adapted methodology, while teachers focus more on elaborating a specific methodology. We can also observe that no adult trainer considers that the usual adult training methodology can be used for working with low skilled adults.



Figure 33. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – comparison by status

✕

Analysing the answers from the Romanian sample according to the experience, data presented in figure 34 shows that less experienced specialists consider a specific methodology as being needed in a bigger proportion compared with more experienced specialists, probably because their experience makes adapting their usual methodology easier when working with low skilled adults.

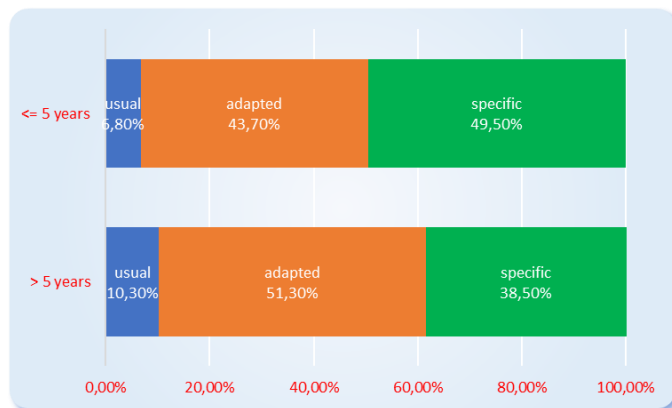


Figure 34. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Romanian respondents consider that when working with low skilled adults, the usual methodology used in adult education is not effective, so trainers need either to adapt their usual methodology to the possibilities of low skilled adults, or to use a specific methodology that is designed to be effective in working with low skilled adults.

While adult trainers consider that adapting the usual methodology could be more effective, teachers focus more on creating a special methodology. Less experienced experts focus more on the need for developing a specific methodology compared with the more experienced experts.

4.2.2. Perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities - Romania

As shown in figure 35, most of the Romanian respondents (around 3/4) consider that low skilled adults can learn best if they participate in adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults, while only 1/4 of the respondents considering that low skilled adults should be integrated in usual training, with trainers giving them extra attention and inviting them to adapted activities. No Romanian respondents considered that low skilled adults are the only responsible for their own education.

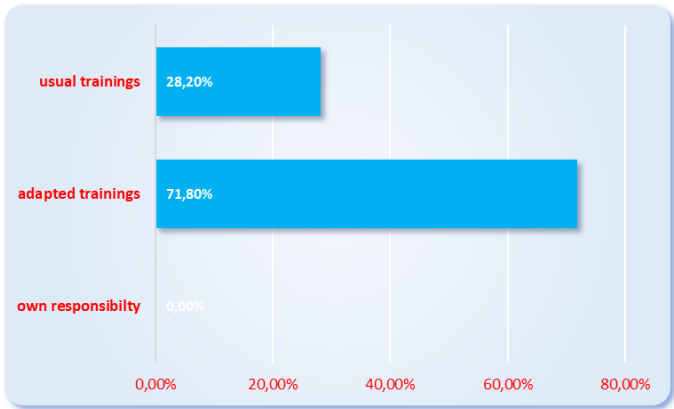


Figure 35. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities

x

Data in figure 36 shows that all three categories of Romanian respondents agreed that adapted training designed especially for low skilled adults are the best way for them to learn. This evaluation is extreme in the case of adult trainers, none of them considering that usual trainings are an efficient way for low skilled adults to learn.

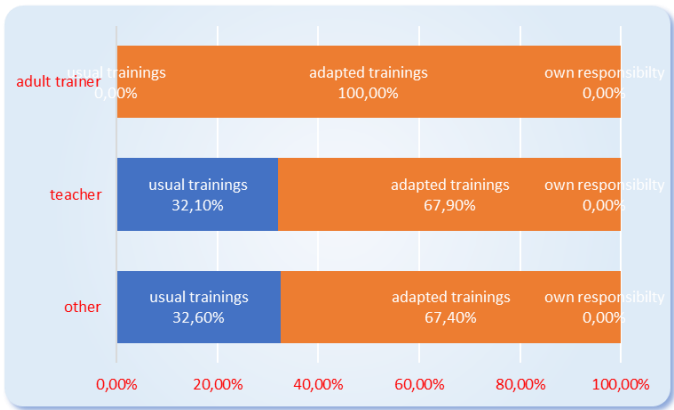


Figure 36. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by status

x

As shown in figure 37, in Romania, the need for adapted trainings for low skilled adults is more obvious for the more experienced specialists compared with the less experienced ones.

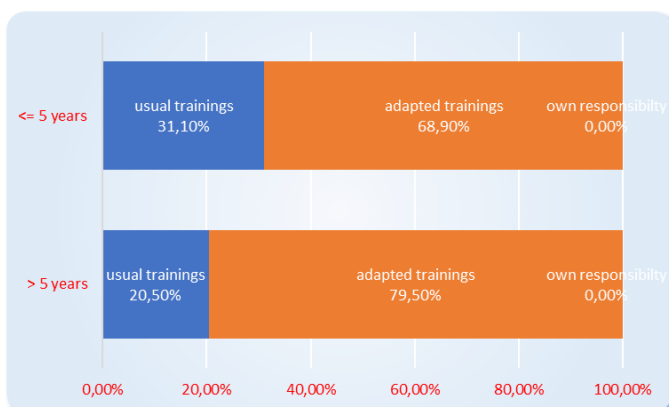


Figure 37. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that most of our Romanian respondents consider that low skilled adults should benefit from adapted trainings designed specifically for them.

Adult trainers in Romania consider that this is the only effective way for low skilled adults to learn, while teachers and other experts consider that integrating them in usual training groups with extra attention from the trainer could also work.

More experienced specialists in Romania also focus more on the need of adapted trainings organized specially for low skilled adults compared with the less experienced specialists.

4.2.3. Perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – Romania

As data in figure 38 shows, 93% of the Romanian respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn effective or in some measure given the adequate methodology, while none of the Romanian respondents consider that learning for low skilled adults is not possible.

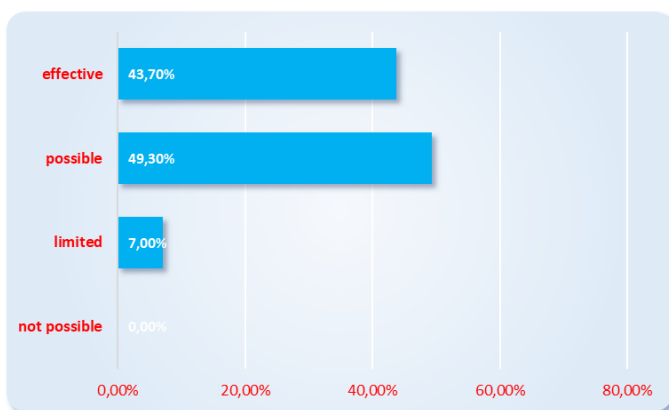


Figure 38. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults

x

Comparing the perceived potential of learning among the three categories of staff from the Romanian sample, data presented in figure 39 shows that adult trainers have the most confidence in the potential effective learning for low skilled adults.

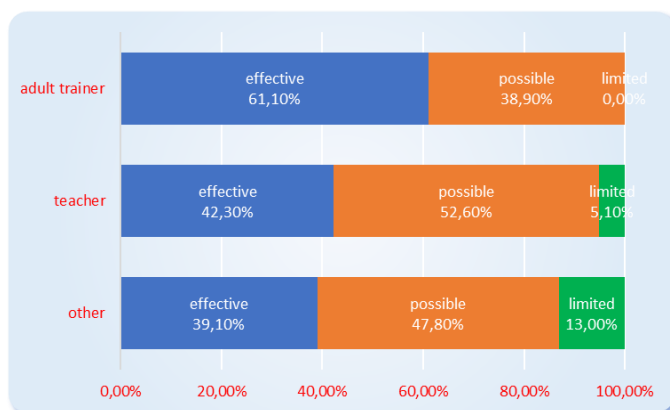


Figure 39. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

In Romania, experience has a limited influence on the perceived potential of learning in case of low skilled adults, as presented in figure 40; still, the percentage of experts considering that low skilled adults can learn only in a limited measure drops from almost 10% for the less experienced specialists to 0 for the more experienced specialists.

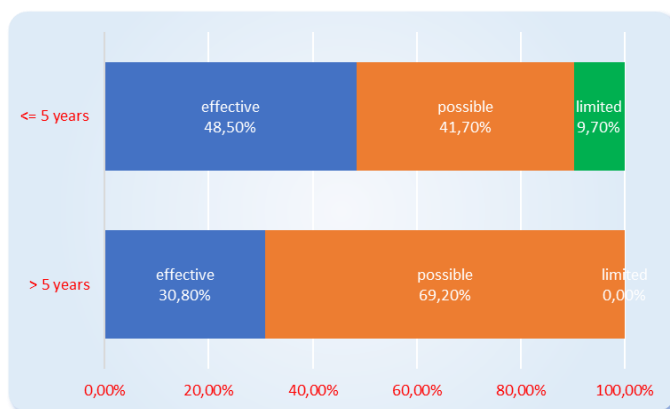


Figure 40. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that most of our Romanian respondents consider that learning is possible and can be as effective as for any other adults, but only when using an adequate methodology. Romanian adult trainers are more confident that low skilled adults can learn as effective as any other adults (by comparison with teachers and other experts), while

more experienced Romanian specialists trust less the potential of effective learning but still consider that low skilled adults can learn in some measure with the adequate methodology.

4.3. Trainers for low skilled adults

4.3.1. Perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – Romania

As data in figure 41 shows, most of the Romanian respondents (more than 80%) consider that specialists working with low skilled adults need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults.

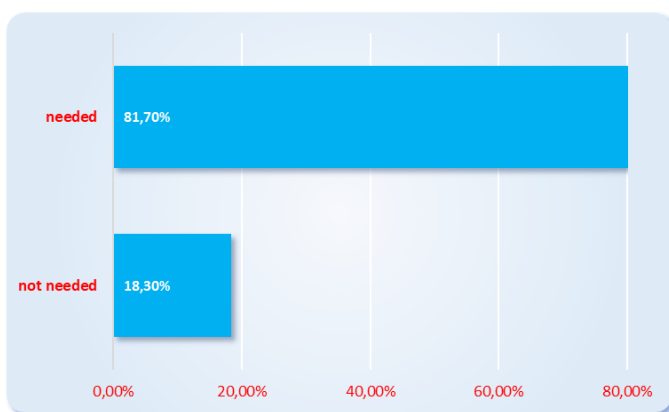


Figure 41. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults

✕

As data in figure 42 shows, the need for specific skills and training for specialists working with low skilled adults is perceived differently by the three categories of Romanian staff, with adult trainers having the smallest percentage of respondents considering training for trainers is needed.

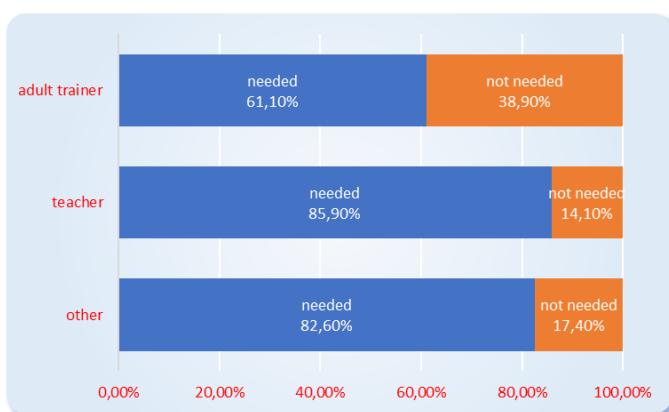


Figure 42. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

As data in figure 43 shows, experience in adult education in Romania has almost no influence on the perceived need for specific skills and training for specialists working with low skilled adults.



Figure 43. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that most of our Romanian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults. The need for training the trainers is less obvious for adult trainers compared with teachers and other experts, but is not influenced by experience.

4.3.2. Perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – Romania

The most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults, as they are perceived by the Romanian respondents (figure 44) are: adapting the content so that low skilled adults could understand it; creating a positive learning environment so low skilled adults can feel secure and encouraged to learn; encouraging the feed-back from low skilled adults in order to further adapt their methodology according to the reached results.

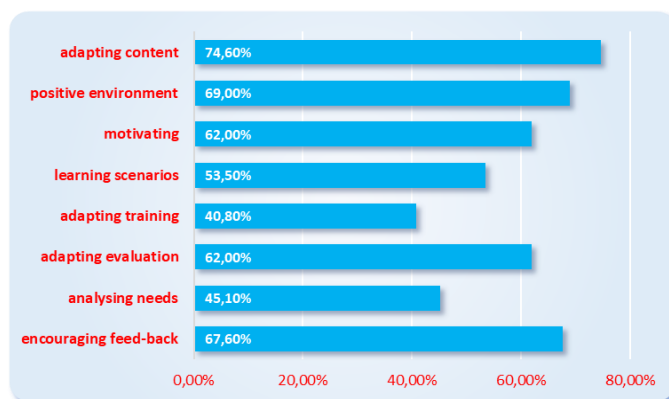


Figure 44. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults

x

Analysing the data regarding the differences among the three categories of Romanian respondents regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults, presented in figure 45, we can conclude that:

- teachers focus more on encouraging feed-back and motivating the low skilled adults to learn compared with adult trainers and other educational experts;
- adult trainers focus less on adapting the evaluation and analysing the needs compared with teachers and other educational experts;

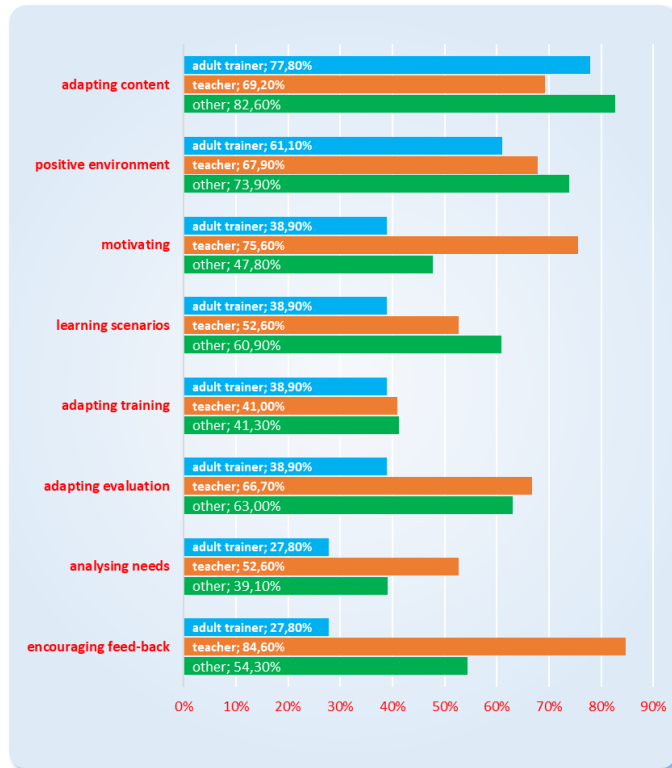


Figure 45. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Romanian respondents with less experience in working with low skilled adults have a general tendency of considering each goal as being more important compared with the more experienced specialists, with one exception: adapting the content is more important for the experienced specialists, as presented in figure 46.

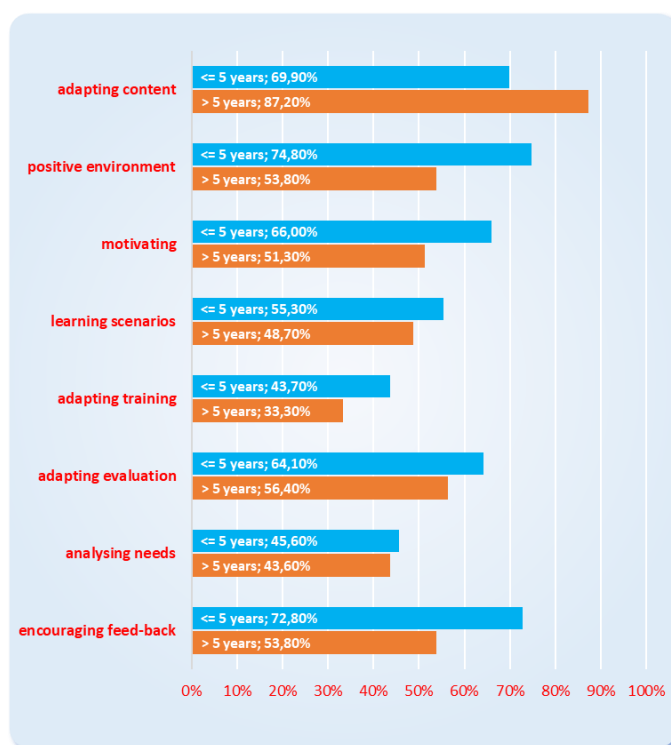


Figure 46. Distribution of answers (Romania) regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Romanian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus more on adapting the content, creating a positive learning environment and encouraging the feed-back. Romanian teachers focus more on encouraging feed-back and motivating the low skilled adults to learn, while adult trainers focus less on adapting the evaluation and analysing the needs. Adapting the content is more important for the Romanian experienced specialists.

4.4. Specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – Romania

Romanian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults (figure 47) need a specific set of skills that includes:

- ☐ empathy and respect for others needs and opinions
- ☐ patience and self-control
- ☐ active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs
- ☐ adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults
- ☐ valuing diversity and respect the differences
- ☐ ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, especially the low skilled adults
- ☐ conflict resolution skills
- ☐ emotional intelligence and stress management skills

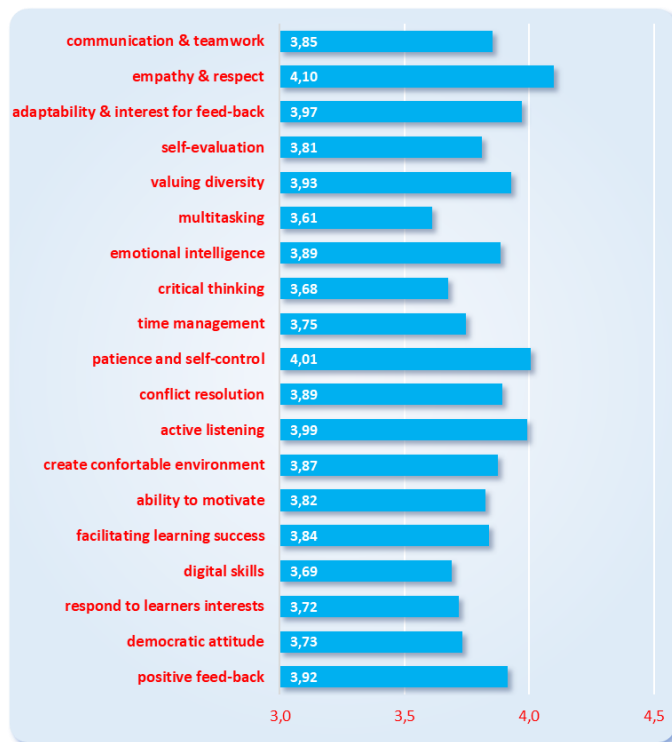


Figure 47. Evaluation (Romania) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults

x

Comparing the evaluation done by Romanian adult trainers, teachers and other specialist, as presented in figure 48, the results showed that adult trainers evaluate all analysed skills as being more necessary compared with teachers and other experts, those two last categories making more or less similar evaluations.

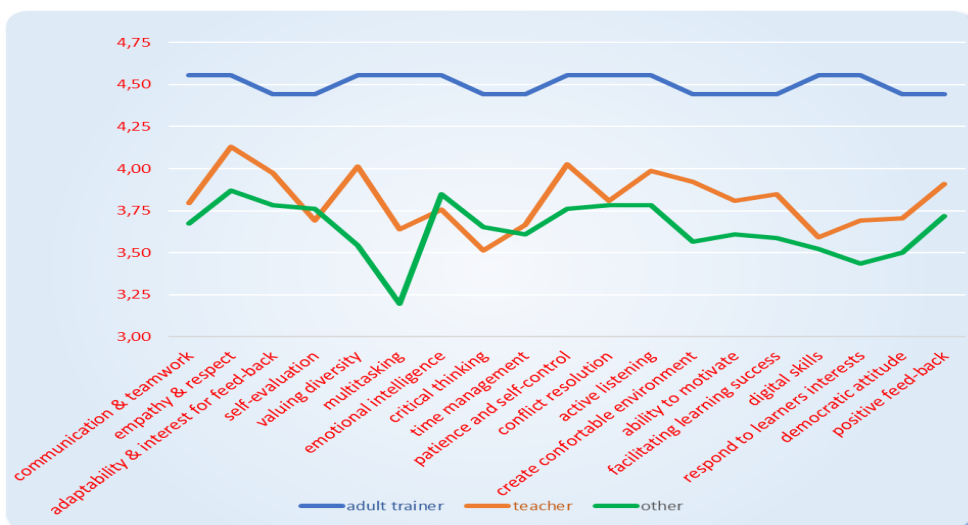


Figure 48. Evaluation (Romania) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Comparing the evaluation done by Romanian respondents according to their experience, as presented in figure 49, the results showed that less experienced specialists evaluated all analysed skills as being more necessary compared with more experienced experts.

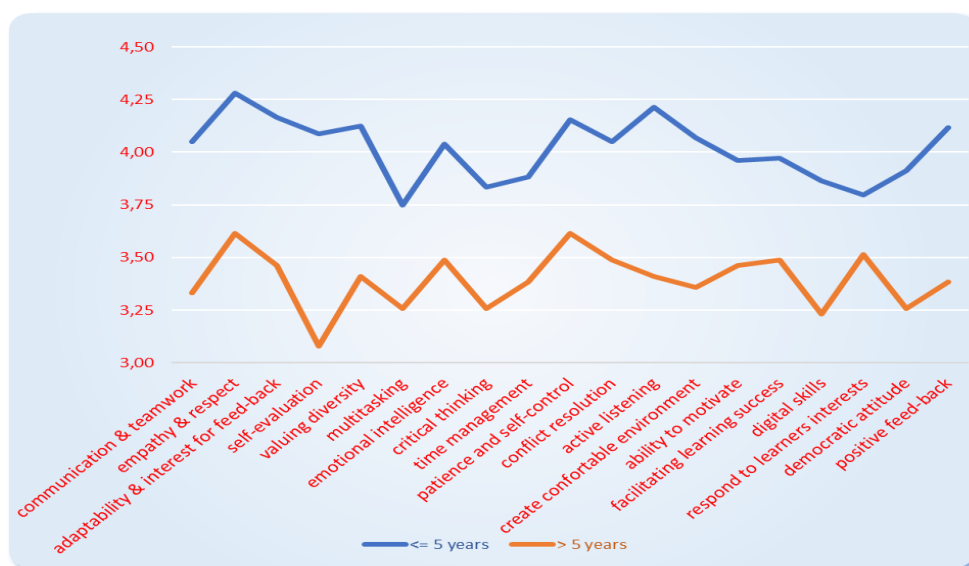


Figure 49. Evaluation (Romania) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Romanian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should have a specific set of skills that needs to include: empathy and respect, patience and self-control, active listening skills, adaptability and interest for feed-back, valuing diversity, ability to provide positive feed-back, conflict resolution skills and emotional intelligence. All analysed skills are considered more important by the Romanian adult trainers compared with teachers and other experts and by less experienced specialists compared with the more experienced ones.

CHAPTER 5

Research data and results in Italy

5.1. The Italian sample

The Italian sample consisted in 141 respondents; as shown in figure 50, most of them are other educational specialists (psychologist, manager of adult training institutions, researchers representing more than half of the total sample), but there are also enough adult trainers and some teachers, so comparisons are possible; still, the low number of teachers in the sample imposes precautions in interpreting the potential differences involving this specific group.

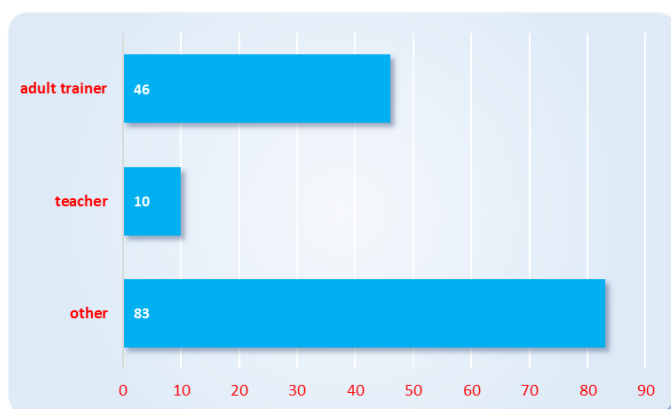


Figure 50. Distribution of the respondents in the Italian sample according to status

x

Figure 51 shows that most of the respondents in the Italian sample are experienced specialists (almost 60%), but there are enough less experienced specialists in the sample in order to make the comparisons possible and relevant and to identify the impact of experience on the dependent variables in the Italian sample.

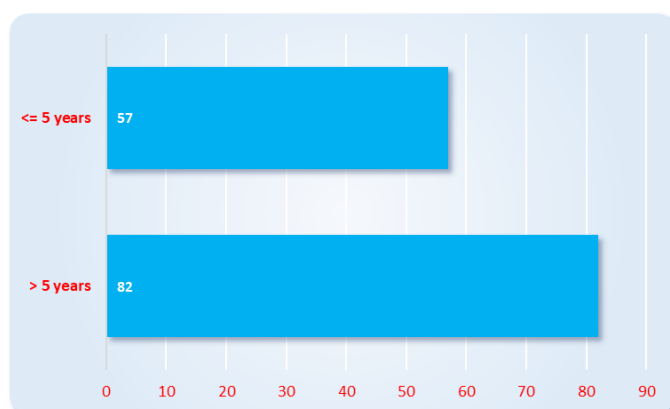


Figure 51. Distribution of the respondents in the Italian sample according to experience

5.2. Training methodology for low skilled adults

5.2.1. Perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – Italy

As presented in figure 52, almost all Italian respondents consider that the usual methodology for adult training cannot be used effectively to train the low skilled adults, with almost two thirds of the respondents considering that training for low skilled adults need to be organized with a specific methodology and one third considering that adapting the usual methodology is needed and sufficient.

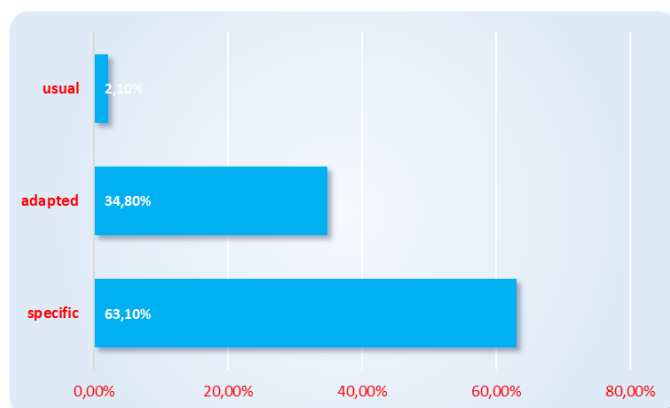


Figure 52. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults

x

Analysing the answers from the Italian sample according to the status, data presented in figure 53 shows a similar evaluation tendency, with all three categories of respondents considering that for training for low skilled adults its best to create a specific methodology.

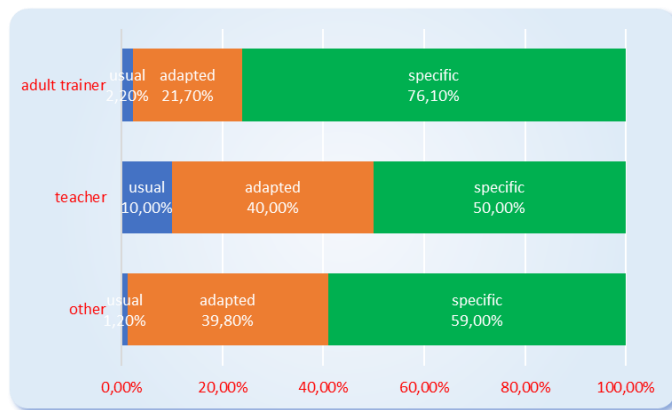


Figure 53. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – comparison by status

✕

Analysing the answers from the Italian sample according to the experience, data presented in figure 54 shows that trainers need a specific methodology to train the low skills adults irrespective of their experience.



Figure 54. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Italian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should use a specific methodology that is designed to be effective in working with low skilled adults, but adapting the usual methodology can also be effective. Using the same methodology as in any other adult training and expect low skilled adult to make extra efforts is only taken into consideration by an insignificant number of respondents.

Using a specific methodology to train the low skilled adults is considered the best option irrespective of the status or experience of Italian specialists.

5.2.2. Perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – Italy

As shown in figure 55, most of the Italian respondents (around 3/4) consider that low skilled adults can learn best if they participate in adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults, while only 1/4 of the respondents considering that low skilled adults should be integrated in usual training, with trainers giving them extra attention and inviting them to adapted activities.

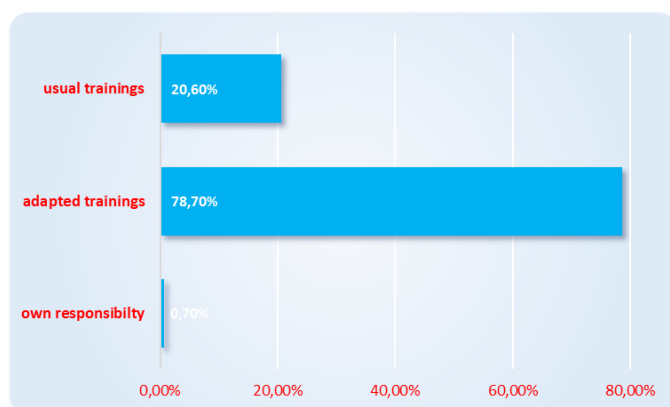


Figure 55. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities

x

Data in figure 56 shows that all three categories of Italian respondents agreed that adapted training designed especially for low skilled adults are the best way for them to learn.

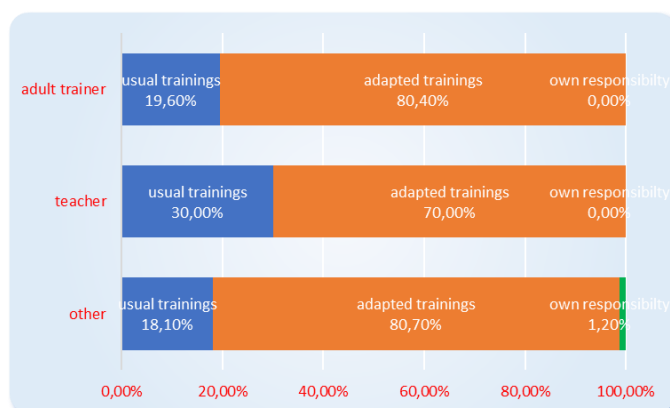


Figure 56. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by status

x

As shown in figure 57, in Italy, the need for adapted trainings for low skilled adults is almost equally obvious for the more experienced specialists and the less experienced ones.

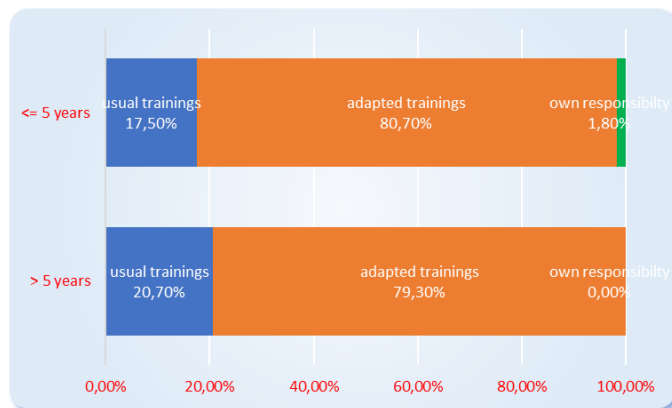


Figure 57. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Italian respondents consider that low skilled adults should benefit from adapted trainings designed specifically for them, and this option is irrespective of status and experience.

5.2.3. Perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – Italy

As data in figure 58 shows, 98% of the Italian respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn effective or in some measure given the adequate methodology, while none of the Italian respondents consider that learning for low skilled adults is not possible.

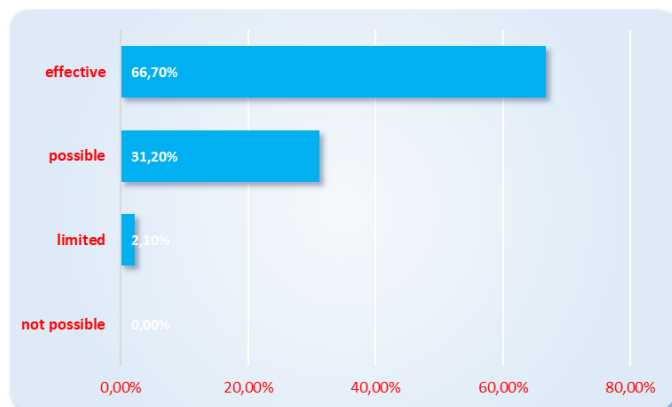


Figure 58. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults

✕

Comparing the perceived potential of learning among the three categories of staff from the Italian sample, data presented in figure 59 shows that teachers have the most confidence in the potential effective learning for low skilled adults.

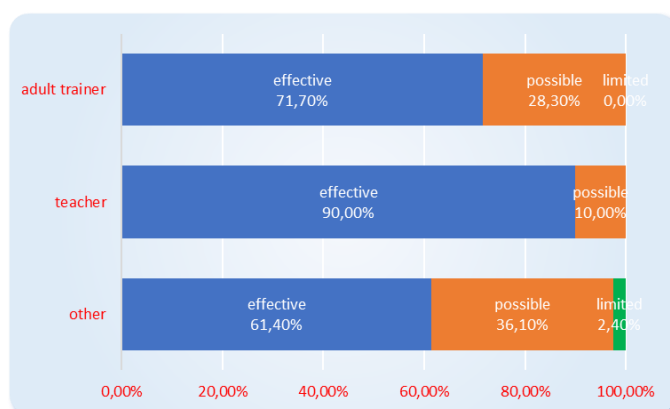


Figure 59. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

In Italy, experience has a clear influence on the perceived potential of learning in case of low skilled adults, as presented in figure 60, with more experienced specialists having more confidence in the ability of low skilled adults to learn as effective as any other adults and none of the more experienced specialists considering that low skilled adults can only learn in a limited measure.



Figure 60. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Italian respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn as effective as any other adults if an adequate methodology is used; some respondents consider that low skilled adults can only learn in some measure, but almost none of them consider that learning is limited or not possible. Italian teachers have more confidence in the potential learning of low skilled adults, almost all of them considering that they can learn as effective as any other adults, while more experienced specialists are more confident that low skilled adults can learn compared with the less experienced specialists.

5.3. Trainers for low skilled adults

5.3.1. Perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – Italy

As data in figure 61 shows, most of the Italian respondents (more than 75%) consider that specialists working with low skilled adults need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults.

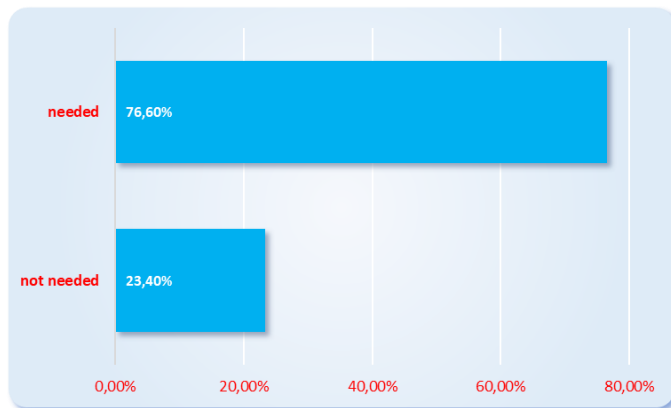


Figure 61. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults

✕

As data in figure 62 shows, the need for specific skills and training for specialists working with low skilled adults is perceived differently by the three categories of Italian staff, with teachers having the smallest percentage of respondents considering training for trainers is needed.

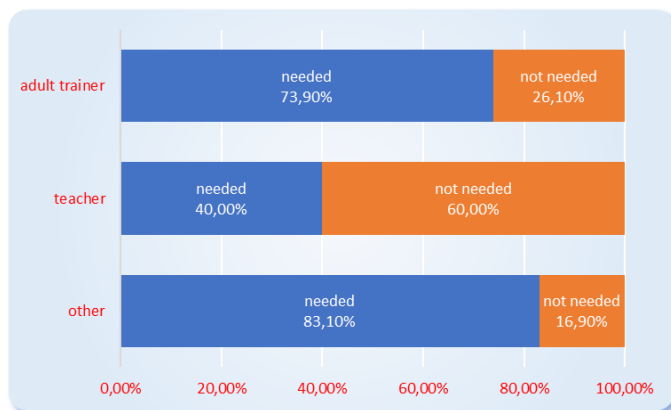


Figure 62. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

✕

As data in figure 63 shows, experience in adult education in Italy has almost no influence on the perceived need for specific skills and training for specialists working with low skilled adults.

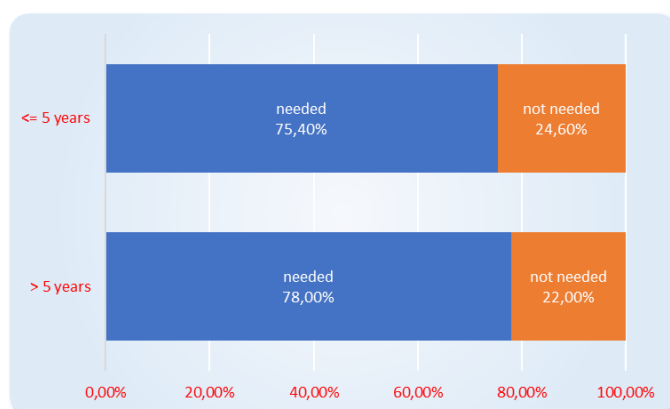


Figure 63. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived need of training for the trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Italian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults. The need for training the trainers is less obvious for teachers compared with adult trainers and other experts, but is not influenced by experience.

5.3.2. Perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – Italy

The most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults, as they are perceived by the Italian respondents (figure 64) are: motivating the low skilled adults to learn and involve themselves in learning; creating a positive learning environment so low skilled adults can feel secure and encouraged to learn; realizing detailed analysis of needs in order to plan the activities that best respond to the specific needs of low skilled adults.

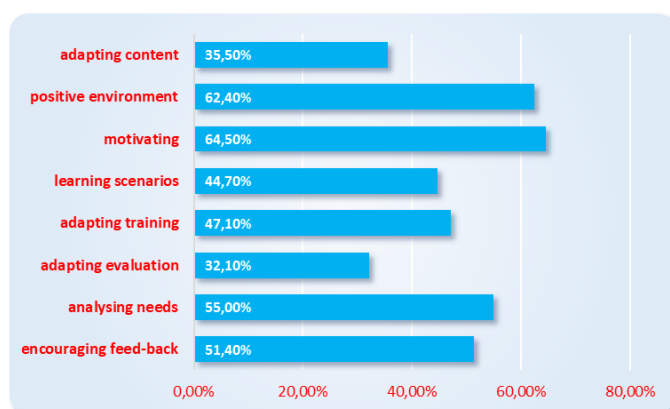


Figure 64. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults

x

Analysing the data regarding the differences among the three categories of Italian respondents regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults, presented in figure 65, we can conclude that Italian teachers focus less on analysing the needs and encouraging feed-back compared with adult trainers and other educational expert, but focus more on adapting the content.

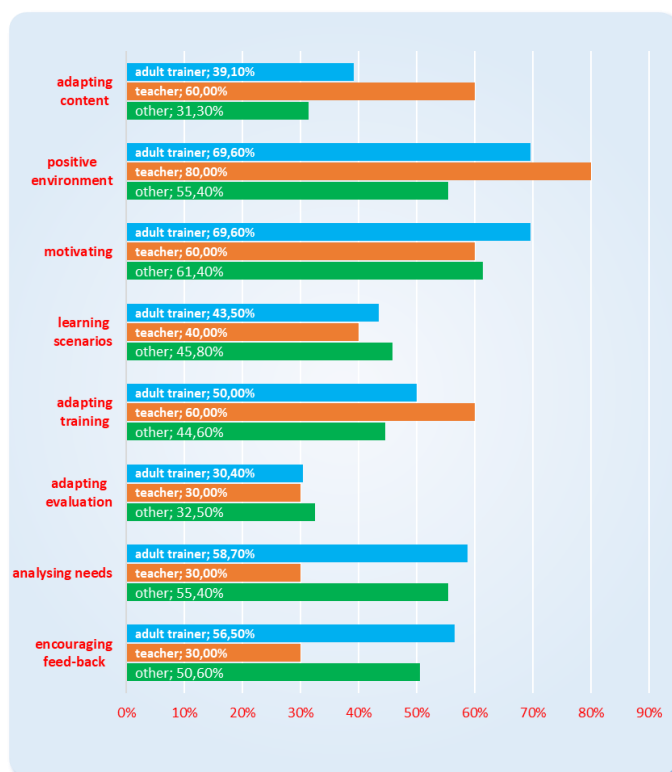


Figure 65. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Italian respondents evaluate the goals of trainers working with low skilled adults irrespective of their experience, as seen in figure 66, with two exceptions: creating a positive learning environment is more important for the less experienced specialists, while analysing the needs is more important for the more experienced specialists.

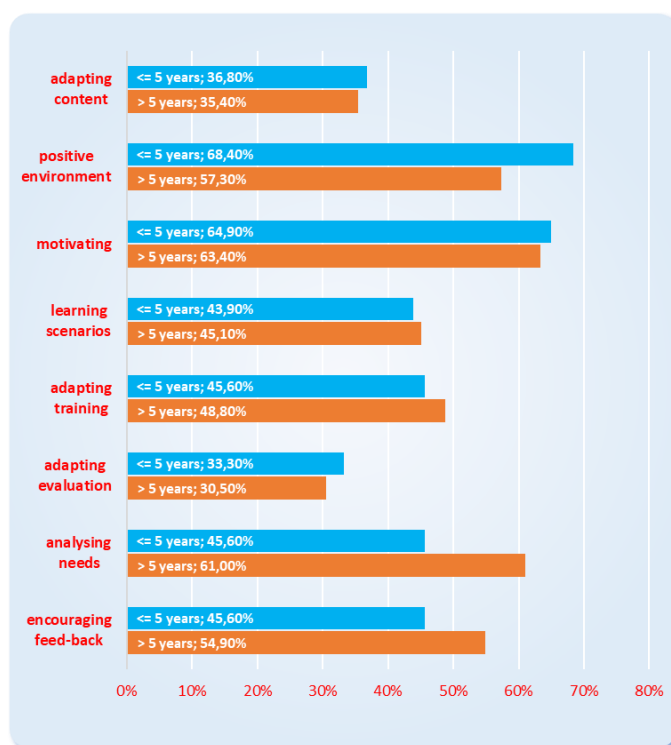


Figure 66. Distribution of answers (Italy) regarding the perceived most important goals for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Italian respondents consider that the most important objectives for trainers working with low skilled adults are to motivate the low skilled adults to learn, to create a positive learning environment and to realize detailed analysis of needs in order to plan the activities that best respond to the specific needs of low skilled adults.

Italian teachers focus less on analysing the needs and encouraging feed-back compared with adult trainers and other educational expert, but focus more on adapting the content.

Italian less experienced specialists focus more on creating a positive learning environment, while the more experienced specialists focus more on analysing the needs.

5.4. Specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – Italy

Italian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults (figure 67) need a specific set of skills that includes:

- ☐ ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities
- ☐ empathy and respect for others needs and opinions
- ☐ active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs
- ☐ valuing diversity and respect the differences
- ☐ ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn

- ❑ adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults
- ❑ ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed.

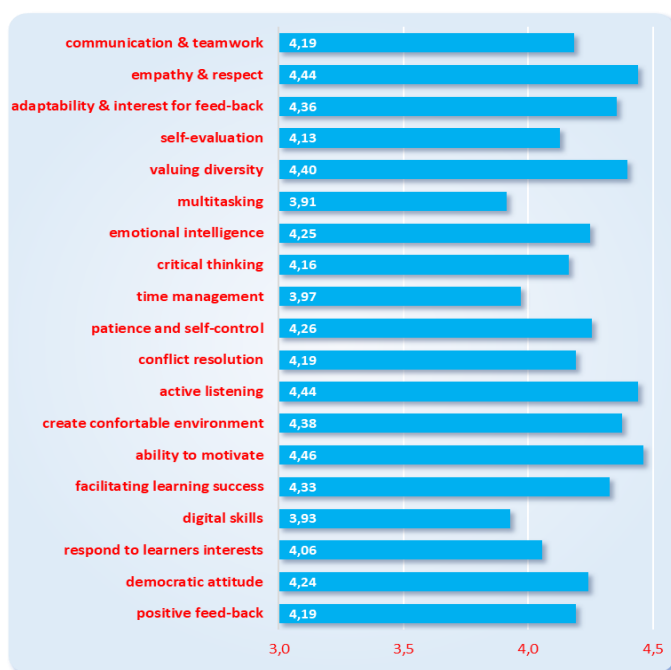


Figure 67. Evaluation (Italy) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults

x

Comparing the evaluation done by Italian adult trainers, teachers and other experts, as presented in figure 68, the results showed that teachers evaluate almost all analysed skills as being less necessary compared with adult trainers and other experts, those two last categories making more or less similar evaluations.



Figure 68. Evaluation (Italy) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Comparing the evaluation done by Italian respondents according to their experience, as presented in figure 69, the results showed that the perception of needed skills for trainers working with low skilled adults is not influenced by experience.

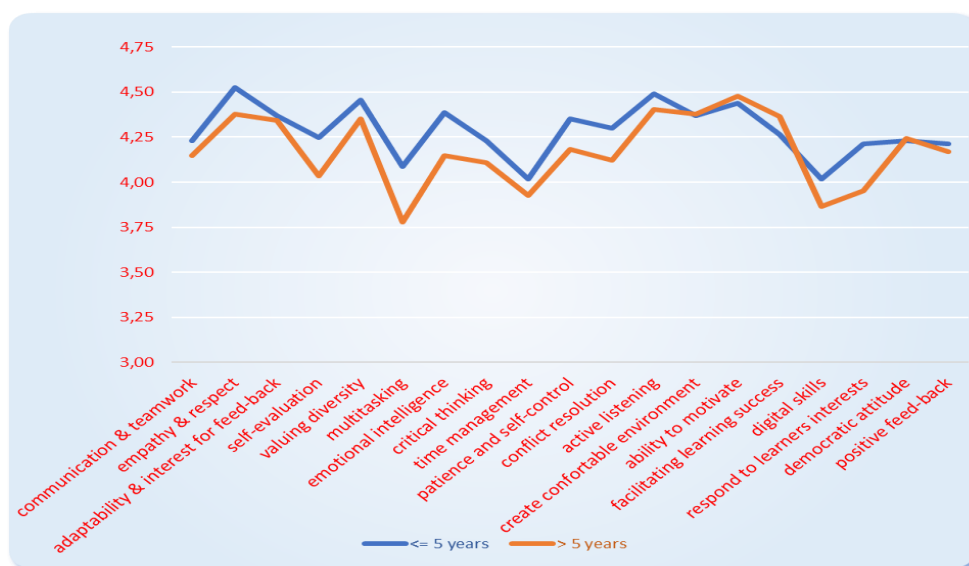


Figure 69. Evaluation (Italy) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our Italian respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should have a specific set of skills that needs to include: ability to motivate, empathy and respect, active listening skills, valuing diversity, creating a comfortable learning environment, adaptability and interest for feed-back and ability to facilitate the success for all learners.

Italian teachers evaluate almost all analysed skills as being less necessary compared with adult trainers and other experts, with those two last categories making more or less similar evaluations.

Italian perception of needed skills for trainers working with low skilled adults is not influenced by experience.

CHAPTER 6

Research data and results in Germany

6.1. The German sample

The German sample consisted in 53 respondents; as shown in figure 70, more than half of them are adult trainers, but there are some teachers and other educational specialists, so comparisons are possible; still, the low number of respondents in each category in the sample imposes precautions in interpreting the potential differences between the groups of German respondents.



Figure 70. Distribution of the respondents in the German sample according to status

x

Figure 71 shows that most of the respondents in the German sample are experienced specialists (around 60%), but there are enough less experienced specialists in the sample in order to make the comparisons possible and to identify the impact of experience on the dependent variables in the German sample (precautions in interpreting this data are still needed considering the relatively low total number of respondents).

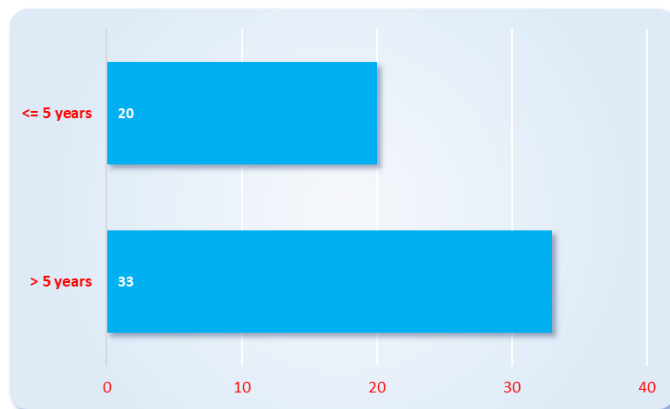


Figure 71. Distribution of the respondents in the German sample according to experience

6.2. Training methodology for low skilled adults

6.2.1. Perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – Germany

As presented in figure 72, almost all German respondents consider that the usual methodology for adult training cannot be used effectively to train the low skilled adults, with two thirds of the respondents considering that training for low skilled adults need to be organized with a specific methodology and more than a quarter of them considering that adapting the usual methodology is needed and sufficient.

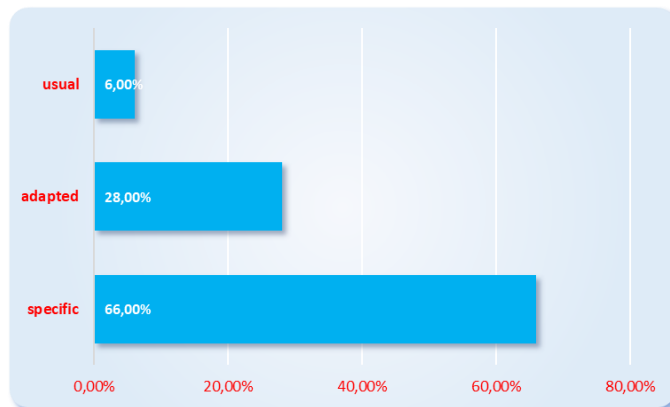


Figure 72. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults

x

Analysing the answers from the German sample according to the status, data presented in figure 73 shows that all three categories of respondents consider that low skilled adults can be trained best using a specific methodology, but the percentage of respondents that agree on using an adapted methodology is bigger for adult trainers compared with teachers and other educational specialists.

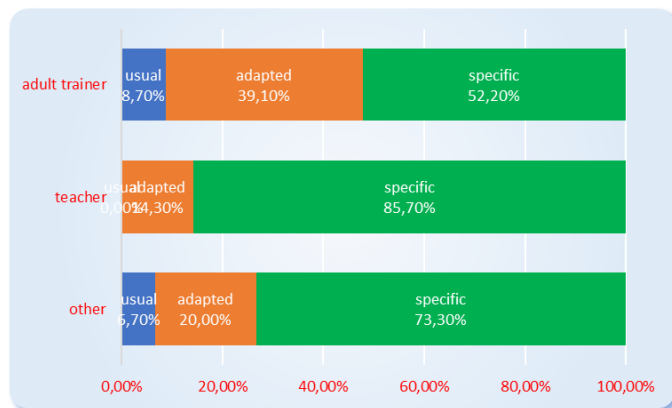


Figure 73. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – comparison by status

✕

Analysing the answers from the German sample according to the experience, data presented in figure 74 shows that trainers need a specific methodology to train the low skills adults irrespective of their experience.

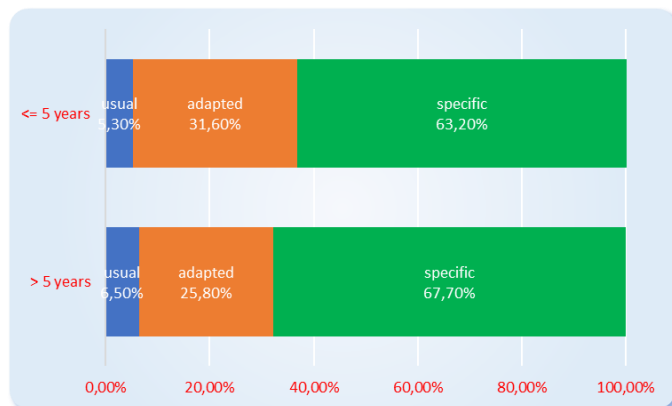


Figure 74. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived need for an adapted methodology for training the low skilled adults – comparison by experience

✕

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our German respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should use a specific methodology that is designed to be effective in working with low skilled adults, but adapting the usual methodology can also be effective. Using the same methodology as in any other adult training and expect low skilled adult to make extra efforts is only taken into consideration by an insignificant number of respondents.

German adult trainers are more opened to adapting the usual methodology to the possibilities of low skilled adults compared with teachers and other experts.

Using a specific methodology to train the low skilled adults is perceived as the best option by the German specialists irrespective of their experience.

6.2.2. Perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – Germany

As shown in figure 75, most of the German respondents (around 3/4) consider that low skilled adults can learn best if they participate in adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults, while only 1/4 of the respondents considering that low skilled adults should be integrated in usual training, with trainers giving them extra attention and inviting them to adapted activities.

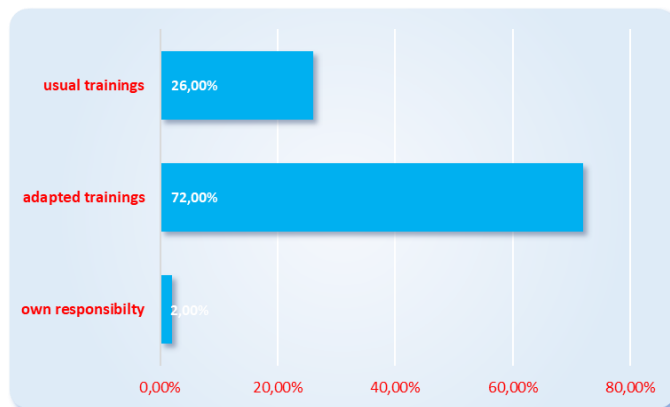


Figure 75. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities

x

Data in figure 76 shows significant differences among the evaluations done by the three categories of German respondents: while most of the teachers and other experts agree that the best option for low skilled adults to learn is to involve them in adapted trainings, almost half of the adult trainers consider that low skilled adults can learn effectively in usual trainings. Also, it is interesting that almost 15% of the German teachers consider that low skilled adults are the only persons responsible for their education and trainers should not do any specific efforts.

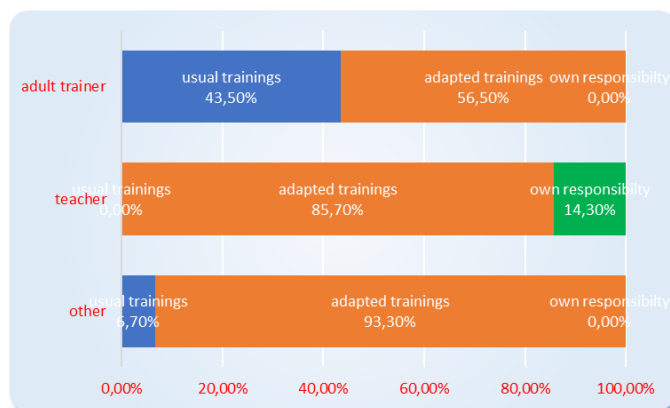


Figure 76. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by status

x

As shown in figure 77, in Germany, the need for adapted trainings for low skilled adults is more obvious for the more experienced specialists compared with the less experienced ones.



Figure 77. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived optimal way to integrate low skilled adults in learning activities – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our German respondents consider that low skilled adults should benefit from adapted trainings designed specifically for them, and this option is irrespective of experience of the specialists making the evaluation.

Still, adult trainers in Germany are more confident in the potential of low skilled adults to learn in usual trainings compared with the teachers and other experts. Also, German teachers are the only category of staff that includes respondents who mentioned that low skilled adults should be responsible for developing their limited skills, and no specific training activities should be organized for them; even if the percentage of those respondents is low (less than 15%), this subject is worth a more detailed analysis in other researches.

6.2.3. Perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – Germany

As data in figure 78 shows, only 72% of the German respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn effective or in some measure given the adequate methodology. While none of the German respondents consider that learning for low skilled adults is not possible, still there are 28% of respondents considering that low skilled adults can learn only in a limited measure irrespective of the used methodology.

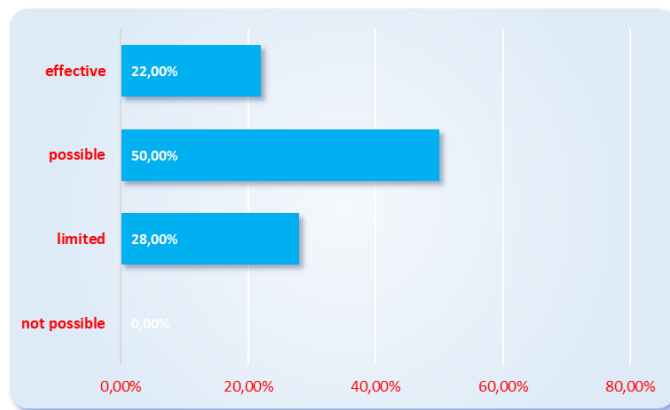


Figure 78. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults

x

Comparing the perceived potential of learning among the three categories of staff from the German sample, data presented in figure 79 shows that teachers have the most confidence in the potential effective learning for low skilled adults.

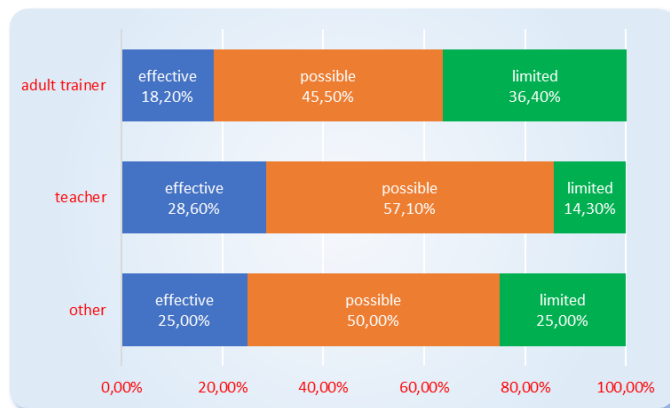


Figure 79. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

In Germany, experience has almost no influence on the perceived potential of learning in case of low skilled adults, as presented in figure 80, with more experienced specialists making similar evaluation with the less experienced ones.

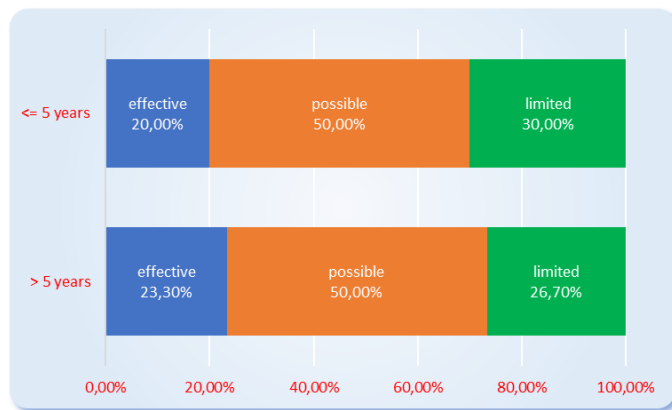


Figure 80. Distribution of answers (Germany) regarding the perceived potential of learning for low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our German respondents consider that low skilled adults can learn in some measure or even as effective as any other adults is the adequate methodology is used; still, there are numerous specialists (more than a quarter) considering that learning for low skilled adults is very limited even when the adequate methods are used.

German teachers have more confidence in low skilled adults' potential of learning, while experience of specialists evaluating this potential of learning has no significant influence.

6.3. Specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – Germany

German respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults (figure 81) need a specific set of skills that includes:

- ☐ empathy and respect for others needs and opinions
- ☐ ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed
- ☐ valuing diversity and respect the differences
- ☐ ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities
- ☐ active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs
- ☐ ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn
- ☐ democratic attitude and human rights values to foster self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-belief in learners' progress
- ☐ collaboration and communication skills, teamwork abilities.

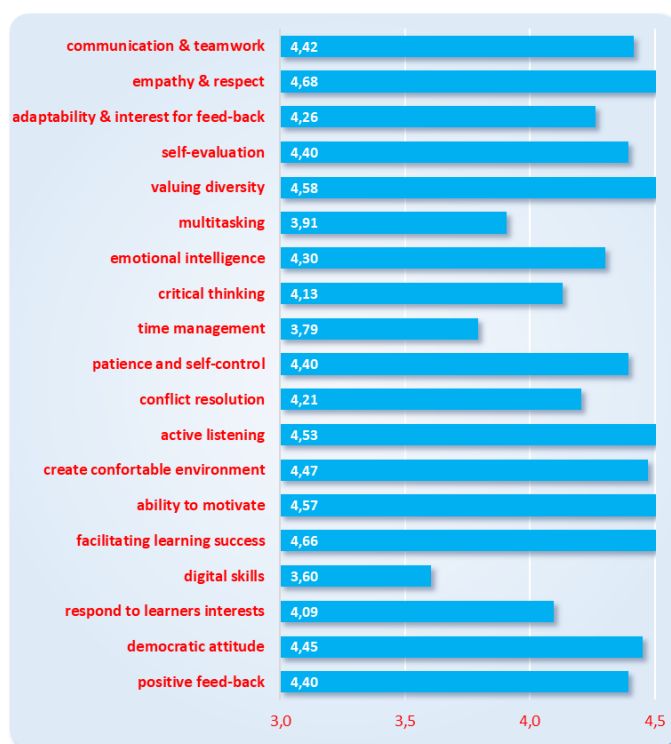


Figure 81. Evaluation (Germany) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults

x

Comparing the evaluation done by German adult trainers, teachers and other specialist, as presented in figure 82, the results showed that the three categories of respondents done more or less similar evaluation regarding the necessity of skills for trainers working with low skilled adults.



Figure 82. Evaluation (Germany) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by status

x

Comparing the evaluation done by German respondents according to their experience, as presented in figure 83, the results showed that the perception of needed skills for trainers working with low skilled adults is not influenced by experience.



Figure 83. Evaluation (Germany) of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults – comparison by experience

x

To conclude on this topic, we can emphasize that our German respondents consider that trainers working with low skilled adults should have a specific set of skills that needs to include: empathy and respect, ability to facilitate the success for all learners, valuing diversity, ability to motivate, active listening skills, creating a comfortable learning environment, democratic attitude and human rights values, collaboration skills and teamwork abilities.

The evaluation of needed skills for trainers working with low skilled adults in Germany are not influenced by status or experience of specialists doing the evaluation.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion on the results

7.1. Training methodology for low skilled adults

The best option to organize trainings for low skilled adults is to use a specific methodology that is designed to be effective in working with them; if that is not possible, adapting the usual methodology for adult trainings to the possibilities of low skilled adults can also work. But the most important thing is that using the same adult training methodology when working with low skilled adults is not an effective option, only an insignificant number of respondents taking this possibility into consideration. Although evaluations in the three countries are more or less similar, there is a tendency of focusing more on specific methodologies for low skilled adults in Italy and Germany, countries where experience in adult training is higher at national level, compared with Romania, where specialists accept in a higher proportion the adaptation of the usual methodology, probably due to the lack of institutional experience in adult training.

Adapting the usual methodology when working with low skilled adults is less relevant for teachers compared with adult trainers and other experts, probably as a direct consequence of the fact that teachers in the second chance programs are more used with the didactic methodology they use with children and its harder to adapt it to work with low skilled adults, while adult trainers and other specialists are more familiar with effective methodologies in adult trainings that they can adapt for low skilled adults.

Experience in adult training has no significant influence on this evaluation, with less experienced and more experienced specialists agreeing that using a specific methodology is the best option when working with low skilled adults.

x

The most effective way to involve low skilled adults in education is to organize adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults; even if this perception contradicts the

potential benefits of diversity in education and adult trainings, it probably reflects the experience of the questioned specialists that showed them that it is very hard to provide trainings for very diverse categories of adults, for instance to integrate teachers and illiterates in the same group and organize effective activities for all of them. Diversity can be useful in adult training within some boundaries, for instance when having teachers of different subjects in the same training group, but when those limits are crossed, the effectiveness is limited for at least some of the participants.

Almost no adult education specialists consider that low skilled adults should be responsible for developing their limited skills, no specific training activities should be organized for them; on the one hand, this suggests that the questioned specialists trust the potential learning for low skilled adults, but, more important, on the other hand, they clearly establish a responsibility for the trainers and adult training organizations in involving and keeping low skilled adults in education.

Evaluations are similar in Romania, Italy and Germany and similar for adult trainers, teachers and other experts, so considering the adapted trainings as the best way of making low skilled adults learn is irrespective of country or status. Still, more experienced specialists have more trust in adapted trainings (compared with integrating low skilled adults in usual trainings), probably as a reflection of their experience and their personal observations of previous work with low skilled adults.

x

Low skilled adults can learn as effectively as any other adults if the adequate methodology is provided to them, or at least in some measure; this evaluation suggests that the specialists in adult education trust the potential of learning in case of low skilled adults, but also assume the responsibility for designing learning activities to facilitate the education for low skilled adults – developing the adequate methodology for them to learn effectively.

Cross country analysis showed that specialists in Italy have the biggest confidence in the potential of learning for low skilled adults, while the German specialists are more reserved, with almost a quarter of them considering that low skilled adults can only learn in a limited measure, irrespective of the training methodology. While we don't have enough relevant data to explain those differences, we can only suppose that German specialists are more reluctant to take the whole responsibility for involving low skilled adults in education. Still, the positive thing is that no respondent in any of the countries considered that learning is not possible for low skilled adults.

Effective learning for low skilled adults is more plausible for adult trainers compared with teachers and other specialists and for more experienced specialists compared with the less experienced ones. This might be a direct consequence of observing the impact of training for low skilled adults, as professional trainers and more experienced specialists had more opportunities to observe low skilled adults learn and therefore having more trust in their learning potential.

7.2. Trainers for low skilled adults

Most of the specialists in adult education agreed that trainers working with low skilled adults need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults,

therefore acknowledging the difficulties associated with involving and keeping low skilled adults in education and the need for special trainings for the trainers that take this responsibility.

The need for specific training for trainers working with low skilled adults is obvious for specialists in both Romania in Italy (no data from Germany) and for both less experienced and more experienced specialists; Still, this need is less obvious for adult trainers compared with teachers and other experts, as probably adult trainers already had some form of specialization (even if not specific trainings) for organizing activities for low skilled adults.

x

Trainers working with low skilled adults should focus more on creating a positive learning environment, on motivating the low skilled adults to learn, on adapting the content to the beneficiary's potential of learning and on encouraging the feed-back so they could better adapt to beneficiaries needs (with all those four options being considered relevant by at least half of the respondents). Therefore, we can consider that the most important role of trainers working with low skilled adults is to facilitate their access to real learning, on the one hand by adapting the contents, an on the other hand by facilitating the emotional state that makes learning possible – motivating, creating a positive work climate, encouraging communication and feed-back.

Romanian specialists focus more on adapting the content and the evaluation, while Italian specialists focus more on analyzing the specific needs of low skilled learners and adapting the training; these differences reflect the different approaches in education in general in those two countries, as Romanian education focus more on content and evaluation, while in Italy the education focuses more on identifying the specific needs and adapting it to them.

Teachers paid more attention to adapting the content, motivating the learners, adapting evaluation and encouraging feed-back compared with adult trainers and other experts. The most probable cause of this different evaluation is the professional back-ground, with teachers being used to work mostly with young persons or even children and adapting their methodology and skills into working with low skilled adults (as teaching 1st degree mathematics for children 6 years old and adults are two completely different things); therefore, the teachers focus more on the specific objective of adapting the content and the evaluation, motivating the learners and asking for feed-back from the adult participants, compared with the adult trainers and other experts in adult education that are more used of working with low skilled adults and they don't focus so much on adaptation.

Trainers, teachers and other experts agree that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus mainly on motivating them for learning and creating a positive learning environment so all adults that want to learn can feel secure and encouraged to learn.

Creating a positive environment and adapting evaluation are more important for less experienced specialists, while analysis of needs is more important for experienced specialists. These differences probably reflect the most difficult things for each category of specialists: while for the less experiences ones creating a positive work climate and adapting the evaluation are the most difficult things (as reaching those goals is not related to using a specific methodology that can be learned, but to personal experience), for the experienced specialists the identification of trainees'

specific needs of more difficult because they make more in depth analysis and consider more dimensions and criteria to differentiate specific needs.

7.3. Specific set of skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults

Trainers working with low skilled adults need a specific set of skills that includes:

❑ *highly important skills: empathy and respect for others needs and opinions, active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs, valuing diversity and respect the differences, ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities;*

❑ *important skills: adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults, ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn, patience and self-control, ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed, ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, especially the low skilled adults, emotional intelligence and stress management skills.*

Romanian, Italian and German specialists in adult education have similar opinions on the skills that are needed for effective training for low skilled adults, but the Romanian ones have a general tendency for the undervaluation of the importance of all analyzed skills compared with the Italian and German specialists, probably due to the fact that the more experienced Italian and German specialists are more aware of the level of necessary skills needed in training the low skilled adults. There is one major exception from this general rule: the German specialists under-evaluate the importance of digital skills compared with the Italian and Romanian specialists, probably due to the fact that digital education for adults is less developed in Italy and Romania so digital skills of trainers is more relevant here.

Trainers working with adults are more aware of the skills needed to work with low skilled adults, therefore they consider each and every skill to be more important compared with teachers and other educational experts.

Less experienced specialists are more exacting when establishing the skills needed for trainers working with low skilled adults, as they evaluate the importance of each skill as being bigger compared with the more experienced specialists. Lack of experience probably makes decisions harder for them, therefore is more difficult for the less experienced specialists to select the more important skills and they over-evaluate the importance of all analyzed skills.

CHAPTER 8

Research conclusions

Involving and keeping low skilled adults in education is a difficult task even for the most experienced and well financed educational systems in Europe, as OECD (2019) acknowledges: “adults with low skills are less than half as likely to participate in adult learning as those with higher skills [...] is especially problematic for adults with low skills, as many of them have experienced failure in education and may find it difficult to return to a classroom setting”.

Therefore, when designing learning activities for low skilled adults, trainers and training institutions have to answer many difficult questions, and our research data collected from specialists across Europe might help them:

❑ What is the learning potential of low skilled adults? Most of the professionals working in adult education agreed that low skilled adults can learn as effective as any other adults, or at least in a relevant measure, but only if an adequate methodology is provided to them.

❑ Do we organize trainings for low skilled adults or we integrate them in usual groups? Most of the professionals agree that the best solution is to organize adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults, therefore using a methodology that focuses on their needs and specific way of learning;

❑ Do we need to use special methods when working with low skilled adults? Most of the professionals agree that training the low skilled adults requires at least the adaptation of the adult training methodology, but it is preferable to use a specific methodology that better responds to their needs;

❑ Do trainers working with low skilled adults need specific training? Most of the professionals agree that working with low skilled adults is a difficult task requiring specific skills, so trainers working with low skilled adults need specific training in order to provide quality services for those beneficiaries.

❑ What are the most important objectives of trainers working with low skilled adults? Most of the professionals considers that trainers working with low skilled adults should focus mainly

on motivating them for learning through adapting the contents, creating a positive learning environment, encouraging the participants to provide feed-back.

Considering those answers, we can emphasize that organizations working with low skilled adults need to be aware that they can learn even as effective as any other adults, but only if: they attend trainings organized specially for them, using a training methodology that responds to their needs implemented by a professional that was train for that job and focuses mostly on adapting the content and encouraging the participation through creating a positive work climate, motivating the trainees and communicating with them to encourage feed-back.

Regarding the training for trainers working with the low skilled adults, our data shows that trainers working with low skilled adults need a specific set of skills that includes:

❑ **highly important skills:** *empathy and respect for others needs and opinions, active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs, valuing diversity and respect the differences, ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities;*

❑ **important skills:** *adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults, ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn, patience and self-control, ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed, ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, especially the low skilled adults, emotional intelligence and stress management skills.*

*Therefore, we propose to the institutions that want to train their trainers to work with low skilled adults to take into consideration a **7-module training**, with four compulsory modules, focusing on the development of the above mentioned highly important skills, and three optional modules focusing on the development of some of the above mentioned important skills; the selection of the optional modules can be done according to the cultural and national context (selecting the skills that are considered more relevant in each country based on our data collected from national specialists) or according to the local context and / or specific interests of the training institution related to the needs of the beneficiaries.*

Annexes

The questionnaire

Integrating low skilled adults in training

This research aims to identify the specific competencies that trainers working with low skilled adults need in order to enhance the quality of their work and provide effective training for those adults.

1. In your opinion, a trainer working with low skilled adults should:

- ☐ use the same methodology as for any other adults, as the low skilled adults only need to make an extra effort to understand and learn
- ☐ adapt their usual methodology to the possibilities of low skilled adults
- ☐ use a specific methodology that is designed to be effective in working with low skilled adults

2. In your opinion, low skilled adults:

- ☐ should be integrated in usual training groups, and trainer should give them extra attention and invite them to adapted activities
- ☐ should benefit from adapted trainings designed specifically for groups of low skilled adults
- ☐ should be responsible for developing their limited skills, and no specific training activities should be organized for them

3. In your opinion, trainers working with low skilled adults:

- ☐ need specific skills, so they should be trained specifically for working with this kind of adults
- ☐ don't need specific skills, any experienced trainer can adapt its methodology for effective trainings for low skilled adults

4. In your opinion, low skilled adults:

- ☐ can learn as effective as any other adults, given the adequate methodology
- ☐ can learn in some measure, if the trainer uses effective methods
- ☐ can learn in a limited measure, even if the trainer uses the most effective methods
- ☐ cannot learn even if the trainer uses the most effective methods

5. In your opinion, trainers working with low skilled adults should focus on:

- ☐ adapting the content so that low skilled adults could understand it
- ☐ creating a positive learning environment so low skilled adults can feel secure and encouraged to learn
- ☐ motivating the low skilled adults to learn and involve themselves in learning
- ☐ creating learning scenarios that can ensure success even for low skilled adults
- ☐ adapting their training methodology to actively involve low skilled adults in training activities
- ☐ adapting their evaluation tools and strategy to the learning potential of low skilled adults
- ☐ realizing detailed analysis of needs in order to plan the activities that best respond to the specific needs of low skilled adults
- ☐ encouraging the feed-back from low skilled adults in order to further adapt their methodology according to the reached results

6. Required competencies for trainers working with low skilled adults

For effective work with low skilled adults, trainers should have a solid knowledge of this field (adult education, low skilled adults etc.), but also a specific skill set that will enhance the quality of their work. Please rate each of those skills according to the importance you consider it has:

| | irrelevant ↓ | unimportant ↓ | can't decide ↓ | important ↓ | very important ↓ |
|--|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| collaboration and communication skills, teamwork abilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| empathy and respect for others needs and opinions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| adaptability and interest for feedback from low skilled adults | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| self-evaluation skills and ability to observe and objectively evaluate its own activity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| valuing diversity and respect the differences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| multitasking skills (managing simultaneous activities for different skills of different target groups etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| emotional intelligence and stress management skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| scheduling and time management skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| patience and self-control | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| conflict resolution skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| active listening skills and interest in everyone's needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ability to create a comfortable learning environment for all adults that want to learn | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ability to motivate and involve low skilled adults in learning activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ability to design learning activities that will allow low skilled adults to succeed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| digital skills and abilities to integrate new technologies in training activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| adaptability to specific interests of different target groups | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| democratic attitude and human rights values to foster self-efficacy, self-confidence & self-belief in learners' progress | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ability to provide positive relevant feed-back for each learner, especially the low skilled adults | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |