Social Connections
TRAINERS FOR E-SOCIAL WORK

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS:

Trainers for E-social work

IO2 Report – Lessons Learnt and Recommendations based On the results of the piloting phase of the TOOL-BOX for eSOCIAL work

Project Number: 2021-1-ES01-KA226-VET-095080

Contents

Introduction

The present document represents a report compiling the evaluation, lessons learnt and recommendations of the training pilot implemented by the assigned partners within the Intellectual Output 2 (IO2) using the Tool-box for e-social work. The **central aim** of this document is to support the transferability of the training programme for Social Work Trainers (SWTs). The piloting phase included **two parts**: the **first part** being represented by an online training focused on the theoretical inputs designed in the Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) manual and the **second part** consisting of the project-based learning training.

Target Group

The target group of the training is made of VET and C-VET trainers, teaching in social care/social work-related courses. Selection was made based on their interest, professional experience, background, job role and/ or capacity to support the implementation of the project activities and to sustain outputs' suitability, credibility, embedding and transferability.

Part 1: Theoretical Input

The main purpose of the first part of the training is to resume the main contents of IO1 manual and provide integrations and clarifications when needed. Concerning the organizational realm, the participants were requested to carefully read IO1 to acquire the basic principles of online teaching in the social sector prior to the beginning of the course. Accordingly, the maximization of the learning outcomes of the training could be achieved. The theoretical input training was designed to have a duration of **4 hours** and to be conducted **online**.

Structure of the theoretical training

The training is structured on **8 modules**, each module lasting for 30 minutes, conducting to a total of a 4-hour length training course. Each module would need a 5-7 minute introduction based on a PowerPoint and a slot of 23-25 minutes of activities.

The training contained the following modules:

1. Professional Engagement
2. Social Work and Technologies
3. Teaching, Training and Learning
4. Digital Resources
5. Communication in Digital Spaces

6. Empowering Learners
7. Facilitating Learners' Digital Competences
8. Digital Feedback

National Data

The partners implemented the pilot as follows: Aproximar (APX) and Virtual Campus in Portugal, Fundación INTRAS (INTRAS) in Spain, Anziani e non Solo (ANS) in Italy and SOSU Østjylland (SOSU) in Denmark.

Portugal

Part 1 of the training was conducted in Portugal with **5 professionals** working in the social field. The recruitment of the participants was made through direct invitation of professionals that have previous collaboration with Portuguese partner organizations, according to their profile and contributions in the past.

The training was delivered through an online environment, with an effective collaboration between Aproximar and Virtual Campus as facilitators of the synchronous sessions, where materials produced by partners were presented and piloted.

The training was supported by the Zoom Platform. For group activities, Jamboard was the main digital tool used. To fulfill the objectives proposed in the application and within the partnership, Aproximar and Virtual Campus followed the session plans previously defined.

Spain

Part 1 of the training was conducted in Spain with **3 social worker professionals**, all of them working at INTRAS. The participants were contacted directly via email.

Moreover, the training was held at the end of April and had a duration of 4 hours. The session was held online using the Teams platform to make the attendance by the participants easier, as the three of them live in different cities. The training followed the proposed structure and made use of the materials developed by the consortium (PowerPoints and exercises).

The manual was sent in advance to the participants so they could read it before the training, which made easier the understanding of the theoretical content explained in a brief manner. Furthermore, an interesting outcome was that the participants seemed to be more interested now in using digital tools when working online, such as Miro.

Italy

Part 1 of the training was conducted in Italy with **8 participants**: 1 neuropsychologist, 1 social worker, 2 project managers, 1 ICT developer, 2 expert social workers' trainers and 1 trainee. The participants are part of the internal staff of the ANS cooperative. They were chosen based on their role in the cooperative, their skills and development possibilities on this topic.

The training took place online, later in March and lasted for 4 hours. The session was delivered using the Zoom platform. The platforms presented during the training and used for the exercises were: Mentimeter, Jamboard and Miro. During the training day the material was not used in its entirety due to lack of time. However, all chapters of the manual were covered, simply the presentation slides were summarized and merged.

As a general remark, no particular difficulties were encountered. Moreover, the evaluation showed that the participants enjoyed the training, rating its execution, content, and methods as highly satisfactory (on a scale of 1 to 5, all responses are between 4 and 5).

Denmark

Part 1 of the training was conducted in Denmark with **5 participants**. The participants' professional backgrounds were as follows: 3 occupational therapists, 1 physiotherapist and 1 nurse. All participants were females, recruited among professional trainers of social workers (social/healthcare helpers and assistants). The participants were recruited at a large VET college, training social- and healthcare helpers and social- and healthcare assistants (EQF 3+4) to work primarily in nursing homes, in home care and in hospitals.

The training was performed online in April 2022. Due to a tight training schedule, the participants were asked to prioritize what exercises to perform, as it was not possible to perform all the exercises within the proposed timeframe.

As a general remark, no difficulties were identified. All the participants got a "hand on" experience performing the exercises. The feedback was positive regarding the actual exercises and what to be aware of when delivering training to the end users.

Lessons learnt and recommendations
What regards this part of the training, the piloting phase was conducted in Portugal with 5 professionals, in Italy with 8 professionals, in Spain with 3 professionals and in Denmark with 5 professionals. All sessions were held online and followed the structure proposed by the consortium based on the materials developed during IO1.
The *main conclusions and recommendations* proposed for this part of the training were:
- As a general remark, no particular difficulties were encountered.
- From a trainer's perspective, it was noted that it can be a bit complicated to summarize the content of the PowerPoints in the timeframe allocated to the session.

- The participants seemed to be interested in using digital tools when working online (for instance, Miro and Jamboard).
- The trainers suggested that inexperienced users should also be kept in mind while conducting the training. They encountered participants who weren't familiar with some of the instruments used, thus, they needed a little more time to accommodate.
- The number of exercises and the time needed to perform all of them exceeded the time schedule available for the training. This should further be considered when planning training sessions.
- The feedback was positive regarding the implemented exercises and what to be aware of when delivering training to the end users.
- Another suggestion brought up by the participants, in order to ensure that each trainee is involved and can participate in the activities, would be that the maximum number of participants to be restricted to 10.
- Participants' testimonies appreciated that: "*The trainers were very clear and explained in detail the concepts and content of the course*" and that "*The group exercises were useful both for the exchange that was created and for the opportunity to learn about and experiment with new tools.*"

Part 2: Project-Based Learning

The Project-Based Learning part of the training is focused on a learning by doing experience. It will be a sequence from the integrations on the basic principles of online teaching in the social sector. Specifically, this part will be devoted to engaging the participants in co-development of a training module on digital tools for social workers (practical application of IO1 theoretical learning). The participants and partners will work together to develop a training module on the digital resource selected, as one blended module on one ICT resource for social workers (SWs).

Principles of PBL

Project-Based Learning is an innovative approach, being more and more used in VET, that involves learners "in the analysis of a given project and the **search for possible solutions**. Proposed projects usually have problems related to practical facts about the content of the proposed course". It involves an "*active exploration of real-world challenges*", by leading participants to develop a project around a 'key question'.

Critical thinking, **collaborative** and experimental/ **experiential learning** are key features of PBL. Characteristics of PBL can be synthetized in the following:

Learners are decision makers and designers of the process	Learners are responsible for obtaining and managing the information collected
Evaluations are conducted continuously	Learning atmosphere that tolerates errors and changes

Based on Part 1/Theoretical input, during the Project-Based Learning training participants are required to use different strategies, such as research, planning, problem-solving, creativity to deliver a "product or presentation that demonstrates learning" and that is "valuable and realistic" work-related.

Structure of the PBL

The the Project-Based Learning training is structured into **4 Modules**, every module being piloted by one partner:

- ➔ Digital Game-based learning (INTRAS)
- ➔ Digital Blackout poetry (ANS)
- ➔ Narrative gerontology and digital storytelling (APX)
- ➔ Digital Art Workshops (SOSU Østjylland)

The duration of the training is **12 hours** and they are structured into **online synchronous teaching sessions**[1]. These sessions created contexts in which participants have direct contact with the trainers. However, the participants are stimulated to collaborate between sessions to deepen their knowledge and the development of their project. The amount of time and effort made by participants at asynchronous format is not countable.

National Data

The aim of the present report is to support the transferability of the Project-Based Learning training for social work trainers (SWTs). Accordingly, one will address each module of the course and the obtained results after its piloting phase.

Game-based learning (GBL)

This module was piloted by INTRAS in Spain. The **main objectives** of the module are:

1. Understanding what game-based learning is.

[1] This training was implemented in Portugal in a face-to-face manner.

2. Understanding how game-based learning can be used by social workers working with vulnerable populations.

3. Isolating specific forms and types of digital games based on the individual needs of different clients' groups.

4. Preparing for possible difficulties in the practical application of the tool and identifying specific methods to overcome these difficulties.

Moreover, the selected **ICT tool** used within this module was the Minecraft game. Minecraft is a videogame in which players explore a blocky 3D world and may discover and extract raw materials, craft tools and items, in order to build structures, earthworks and simple machines. This game promotes critical thinking, collaboration, organizational skills and problem-solving abilities, amongst others.

As a **brief overview** of the session, this module displayed basic knowledge about what game-based learning is. The **duration of the training session** on Game-based learning is 3 hours:

- 1 hour for theoretical explanation and questions.
- 1 hour to play individually the proposed game. If the participants are used to the game, the trainer can propose to play a multiplayer game.
- 1 hour to reflect and discuss in group about the abilities trained using digital games.

The chosen **evaluation method** was a questionnaire including 5 simple questions that allowed the participants to self-assess the knowledge acquired and potential skills to use this technique. The participants are asked if they feel confidence introducing and even delivering a game-based learning session to a group of users. The evaluation of the trainers has been very positive, they enjoyed the course and thought it was well organized, in terms of duration, web meeting chosen, atmosphere, communication and availability of the trainer, etc. The trainer was positively evaluated as well.

About the contents delivered, the participants thought that they are useful in their daily practice and will contribute to a deeper understanding about how to use ICT to help their clients. Analyzing the results of the self-assessment evaluation we can see an increase in the perception of "I am capable of…".

Part 1 of the training has been better rated than part 2. It seems that the duration of part 2 was not the most appropriate. All the participants agreed that thde promotion of teamwork was one of the best advantages of using co-creation, as well as self-reflection. Anyway, comments from participants have been very positive, all of them think that the co-creation of the module on Game-based learning has been a great idea even when it was quite difficult for the three of them.

Whereas the **challenges** encountered by the participants, it was complicated to understand what Game-based learning is, as there are a lot of different terms related to the same or similar concept: Games, Serious Games, Game-Based Learning, Gamification, etc. Also,

deciding which videogame to choose was an issue, as none of the participants and neither the trainer are video gamers. Nevertheless, the **strategies** found in order to overcome these challenges indicate that the expert advice from the Social Connections consortium helped to understand the different terms related to the use of games to promote the learning process and make a better choice on the game to be used.

The participants **recommended for this module** that it would be useful for the trainers to first try the game they are going to use with the trainees in order to foresee potential difficulties.

Blackout Poetry

This module was piloted by ANS in Italy. The **main learning** objectives of the module are:

1. Understanding what Blackout Poetry is
2. Understanding how it can be use in the context of social work
3. Being able to perform it online
4. Being able to adapt the technique to different target groups and settings

The following **tools** were shown and used to show participants how they could perform Blackout poetry with their users:

- Blackout Bard, available for Android and IOS – The app enables to create blackout art right from the smartphone or tablet with just a few clicks. The user could choose from a variety of passages kept as samples in the app, or source his/her own from the web, and then style them and share. However, it should be noted that it is available in English only and requires quite advanced ICT skills.
- Google Doc and Google Presentation, simple online and free document editors allow with few steps (described in the training module) to perform blackout poetry without downloading any applications.

Moreover, the training has been designed in an online format, so a videoconferencing platform (such as Zoom or Teams) that allows slides to be projected and the trainer's screen to be shared is needed. Secondly, presentation slides of the theoretical material are needed to allow the trainer to accompany his or her oral presentation with visual material. Finally, the digital tools presented above needed to show participants their use in real time.

As a **brief overview** of the sessions, the duration of the training session on Blackout Poetry was **4 hours**, which included an initial part of presentation of the theoretical material and a subsequent part of participants' rehearsal of the technique itself. The 2 facilitators divided their roles into (1) material presenter/trainer and (2) observer, both offering support where needed to the participants. The different roles taken on allowed for two different perspectives on the progress of the training, such that it could be evaluated more objectively. After trying to create their own poem, a discussion was opened among participants about how to propose this technique to their target groups.

As an **evaluation method**, it was chosen to create a simple questionnaire that would allow people to self-assess their skills with this technique. The self-assessment was built as an easy-to-use tool, allowing the trainer to assess his/her readiness in terms of delivering a Digital Blackout Poetry session, their ability to support users and adapt the session to a specific target group. The evaluation of the trainers was extremely positive; in fact, 100% of the participants rated 4 - on a scale of 1 to 4 - the trainers' competence with respect to the content presented, their clarity, their communication, their kindness and ability to create a positive learning environment.

Almost all participants rated the training content as useful for their professional role, allowing them to learn more about ICT tools they were unfamiliar with - choosing score 4. Only one participant chose a score of 3 out of 4 for all three items.

When asked about the challenges encountered, the participants indicated that overall, the training programme ran well and participants didn't raise or show any major challenges. The exercises and the activities proposed were well received and the trainers were able to implement the programme as planned, although some participants mentioned that they would have liked to have more time and receive a longer training. In relation to the Blackout poetry technique, the main potential **problem** raised by participants was related with the fact that the methodology itself was considered a bit difficult for a vulnerable audience, with the use of ICT adding a layer of complexity.

The **strategies** proposed by the participants in order to overcome these challenges are: to organize the sessions with end-users in smaller groups; to provide very clear instructions to trainees in relation with how to guide end-users in the technical aspects and to provide examples that can support the understanding of the process.

Narrative gerontology and digital storytelling

This module was piloted by Aproximar in Portugal and it was conducted in a face-to-face manner. The **main learning** objectives of the module are:

1. Define the concepts of Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling
2. Raise understanding of how these concepts can be combined as an innovative resource
3. Raise awareness on how it can be used in the context of social work
4. Raise confidence to apply this resource in a digital environment
5. Understand how StoryJumper – an ICT tool – can be a useful resource in implementing activities related with Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling

The selected **ICT tool used** for this module was StoryJumper. StoryJumper is an online platform that allows teachers and students to create their stories and narrate them, by adding voice files to text and images. This is an interesting resource to be used in the implementation of activities related with Digital Narrative Gerontology, as it allows to create a "book" based

on the story that is going to be narrated by the people involved in the activity, especially those who are housebound because of disability, illness, or COVID-19 related restrictions.

However, in the co-creation sessions organized in the framework of this module, the trainers have opted for the discussion with the participants about the ways of implementing gerontological narrative and digital storytelling, without focusing any ICT tool. This ICT tool is not translated in Portuguese, thus it could cause some discomfort and inhibition to the participants.

What regards the **structure** of the session, for an effective development of the co-creation phase, it was agreed that the first session would be more theoretical, to ensure that participants are on the same page in terms of knowledge about Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling. Aproximar also took into consideration the implementation of some exercises that would promote deeper and effective discussions between the participants, to have a positive outcome. These exercises included an Empathy Map and an exercise related with "Expectation and Fears" to introduce ICTs in the professional context.

For the implementation of the activity related with Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling, it is necessary to have a computer with internet connection, both from the side of the professional and of the client, to access StoryJumper tool. Accordingly, the co-creation phase was divided into 4 sessions with a duration of 3 hours each. As an **evaluation method**, a questionnaire was applied to evaluate the sessions, focusing on the dimensions of organization and evaluation of the co-creation process. Concerning the organization indicators, participants strongly agree with most of the items. The item related to the duration of the sessions was evaluated lower than the others, perhaps because they would like to have more time to continue the fruitful discussions raised by the topic. In terms of Satisfaction with the co-creation process, it is also possible to conclude that participants provided positive feedback.

The co-creation sessions flowed in a smooth way, with all participants deeply involved in developing an effective exercise to promote the inclusion of elderly people in their professional context, related with Narrative Gerontology and Digital Storytelling. During the sessions, it was possible to understand that some participants already implemented exercises that are clearly in line with the aim of this module. In this way, the main challenge was to try to develop an exercise that would cover all these gaps previously identified by them in the past.

Below are listed examples of **situations** that participants faced in the past with the implementation of a similar activity:

- 1 participant mentioned that some elderly people may not have a close relationship with family members, or they are not geographically close.
- 1 participant mentioned that some topics are more sensitive to talk and can become discomfortable for elderly people (and people in general) to talk, especially when we invite to talk about their own story (e.g. Valentine's Day, where people are asked to tell how they met their partner, and someone lost his/her wife/husband recently).

According to the situations that participants faced in the past and that were mentioned in the previous section, these were the strategies that they found to try to not get in a similar situation, when implementing this exercise in the future:

- ***1 participant mentioned that some elderly people may not have a close relationship with family members, or they are not geographically close*** – that's why the exercise proposed for this module considers different ways to involve family members OR other key people, even if they are geographically close or not).
- ***1 participant mentioned that some topics are more sensitive to talk and can become discomfortable for elderly people (and people in general) to talk, especially when we invite to talk about their own story (e.g. Valentine's Day, where people are asked to tell how they met their partner, and someone lost his/her wife/husband recently) –*** in this case, participants concluded and highlighted in the suggestions/tips for the activity, to try to choose as much generic and neutral topics as possible, to make everyone feel comfortable to talk about it personally**.**

Digital Art Workshop

This module was piloted by SOSU Østjylland Denmark. The **main learning** objectives of the module are:

1. Understanding what Sketchpad app is
2. Understanding how it can be used in the context of social work
3. Being able to use the tool in an online or hybrid setting
4. Being able to target different groups and settings

The **selected ICT tool** used for this module was Sketchpad App. Sketchpad app is a free online drawing application for all ages, making it possible to create, share and export digital artwork in popular image formats such as JPEG, PDF, PNG etc. The app is currently available in English only and requires basic/medium ICT skills.

The creation of Digital Art Workshops should be planned as **hybrid sessions**, if possible, combining physical workshops with online workshops. For the virtual part, an online videoconferencing platform resource such as Zoom or Teams is needed, allowing slides to be projected and the trainer's screen to be shared. A PowerPoint presentation including slides of the theoretical material is needed for the trainer to accompany his or her oral presentation with visual material. Finally, a real time showcase of the Sketchpad App, showing/explaining the features of the digital tool to participants in real time, will promote the understanding and user experience.

As **a brief overview** of the session, the expected duration of a session of a Digital art Workshop is **2 hours**. Prior to the training participants must be made aware that participating in the Digital Art Workshop requires digital hardware with an internet connection – e.g. a laptop or a tablet. The first workshop should be planned as a physical workshop if possible, getting to know each other and making facilitating the process easier for the trainer. The

trainer makes use of the PowerPoint presentation to introduce the methodology of digital training. Alternatively, the more experienced ICT users can watch the tutorial made for this module and work individually at their own pace. Afterwards, pieces of digital art have been created, a feedback session, where participants are invited by the facilitator to share and comment on their results with the rest of the group is a good idea.

The chosen **evaluation method** is a simple 5-step questionnaire as self-assessment tool has been developed for evaluation of the module, allowing the trainer to assess his/her readiness in terms of delivering a Digital Art Workshop and his or her ability to support users and adapt the session to a specific target group. The **satisfaction survey** showed that the trainers got a "hand on" experience performing the workshop. The feedback was positive regarding the actual steps through the workshop and what to be aware of when delivering training with the end users. However, the time needed for performing the exercises and the potential need for digital support was an issue all trainers commented on as an important aspect to consider when planning the training sessions, depending on the target group.

All trainers were very pleased with the content of the workshop, especially the possibility of watching a video tutorial that explains all the steps of the workshop. If the target group is homogeneous in terms of ICT literacy the trainer might adapt the lessons more precisely to the needs of the users. The composition of a target group with roughly equal digital competences can be an advantage, both in terms of explanations, support, feedback and pace of the process.

The **challenges** noted by the participants were: the size of the group – if the training group is large, the discussions might take more time; ICT literacy of the group - if the group has limited ICT skills, it might be necessary to allow more time for explaining how to implement the procedures from a digital point of view and providing more one-to-one guidance on specific features.

The **indicated strategies** that could overcome the challenges were: to set a maximum number of participants in a workshop, depending on the ICT skills of the target group; if there is a large group, an assisting trainer can be appointed if possible; to allow time for inexperienced ICT users to get to know the digital tool – lower the expectation for the learning outcomes in order to promote self-efficacy, progressing slowly learning by doing.

Lessons learnt and recommendations
Concerning the second part of the training, the piloting phase was conducted Portugal with 5 professionals, in Italy with 8 professionals, in Spain with 3 professionals and in Denmark with 5 professionals. Since the evaluation and recommendations differ for each module, they were developed in the previous section.
However, these are some general *results and comments* for part 2:
- The trainers and the structure of the training were positively evaluated.

- Most of the participants found the contents of the training useful for their everyday activities.
- Some of the participants suggested that the size of the groups was too large for the purpose of the training.
- Results indicate that the allocated time for this part of the training should be increased.
- Since many of the participants are not familiar with the digital concepts used during the sessions, the facilitators should be very clear in their speech and instructions.

Conclusions

As it is noticed from the gathered evaluation and results, the piloting phase of the Tool-box for e-social work (IO2) was overall evaluated as successful. The **general recommendations** gained from the feedback of both the trainers and the participants indicate that:

- There should be allocated more time for the training sessions (to be applied for both parts) since the trainers found it hard to summarize all the information and include all the materials within the given timeframe.
- The use of different interactive digital tools, such as Miro and Jamboard are highly suggested.
- There should be set a maximum number of participants at the sessions (no more than 10 trainees), in order to ensure the active participation of all participants.
- The trainer should be aware of the level of familiarization with the digital realm of each participant. Ideally, sessions should be organized based on the participants' level, if not, at least adapted to be as inclusive as possible.

Social Connections
TRAINERS FOR E-SOCIAL WORK

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Project Partners

ANS
Anziani e non solo
società cooperativa sociale

aproximar
COOPERATIVA DE SOLIDARIEDADE SOCIAL, CRL

EaSI

FUNDACIÓN intras

SOSU Østjylland

virtualcampus

Project Number: 2021-1-ES01-KA226-VET-095080