



Del. 2.1 - Profile of the Case Manager for the work placement of disabled young people in social farms

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Main reflective points in-depth interviews

The aim of this report is to bring into light some of the main results deduced from the in-depth interviews that were taken in The Netherlands, Germany and Italy. Specifically, particular focus will be put on one aspect: the Case Manager's profile.

The aim of the research is in fact that of creating a new, innovative profile of the Case Manager for the work placement of disabled young people in social farms. New, because as it will be described, however moving from a traditional profile, the one here described has new characteristics and abilities he needs to apply at a different sector, the Social Farming, gathering the abilities and competencies also required in the field of social and health care. Innovative, because it is the result of a process that aims to introduce a disabled young people through a pathway that starts within the schools and builds a bridge directly into the social farming world. This one is however not an ending point: it is, instead, just a first step, not a destination, but a springboard for a smooth introduction of the disabled young people into the labor world and thus the social inclusion.

About 60 privileged testifiers were approached through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted among equally distributed interviewees in the three interested countries. Attached, you will find each of the national reports; readers are invited to have a look at them in order to understand a detailed framework.

As we will underline later, the sectors involved by the PROFARM activities are differentiated, the values involved go beyond national borders. Interlocutors have been chosen taking in account the different interested areas that are affected by PROFARM.

Socio-economic area	Profile of the respondents
EDUCATION & FAMILIES	School managers/directors Work-based learning coordinator Special needs expert/activities coordinator Parents of students with special needs Families' associations
LOCAL PUBLIC BODIES	Regional public authorities Local public authorities
AGRICULTURAL COMPANIES & OTHER RELEVANT ORGANIZATIONS	Agricultural companies Business associations/Trade Unions Companies' tutors for VET National/local forums and networks of SF Social and educational farms
HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE	Local Health Authorities (managers/coordinators) Psychologists Social cooperatives Social workers

Even though the interview was focused on the profile of the Case Manager, other aspects of Social Farming were also inquired, as the general framework of Social Farming and correlated opportunities and challenges, useful good practices for the PROFARM project and former experiences. In each of the reports you will find links that lead to more detailed information on the experiences (SO Far and MAIE project for example).



Social farming: a new phenomenon with ancient grassroots

Rural societies in Europe have always developed experiences aimed at promoting different practices and types of solidarity, welfare and social inclusion. We could say that the social sensitiveness is part of the agricultural DNA.

European countries are facing different steps of evolution in this field, mostly influenced by their different historic paths but also by the decisions of the policymakers involved and relative political priorities.

Lately, European grants are putting attention on SF and single countries are taking the initiative as well, also for what concerns the elaboration of a normative framework. The discussion around the latter topic is intense, because the normative framework may actually influence the actors already involved, or make it impossible for some new types of actors to enter the field.

Even though different, according to experiences, all the SF practices have some values in common: the mixture between social inclusion and agriculture, which results in welfare, healthcare, education, training and employability activities. These activities are particularly aimed at those groups of people who may incur into social exclusion.

In this complex and articulated situation, agriculture is thus using its productive elements to develop services for the citizens: nursery, educational farms, green tourism, employment for disadvantaged people.

What is clear is that a picture drawing the agriculture as a recognized actor with the potentiality to answer to the needs of local communities is emerging. Many of these experiences developed independently, which makes it difficult to frame the phenomenon in numerical data.

SF represents also a new opportunity for the farmers to carry on alternative services, improving and enlarging the aim of their activities and their role in the society.

The CASE MANAGER: an “easy” role to define, but “difficult” to play

First of all, let us be clear on the title: the role is difficult to play because of its importance in the PROFARM project.

Actually, that of the Case Manager is not a new profile. It affirmed itself in the healthcare sector, as a model for the management of the healing process of a patient, with the goal of assuring the most adequate cures and improve the quality of the service. It is an innovative way of assuring social and health care in order to tackle complex situations with a multileveled approach. The values at the bottom of this new profile move from a global vision of the person, a personalization of the projects and pathways, a working network and an improving process based on empowerment.

The Case Manager analyses the need, manages, applies, coordinates, monitors and evaluates the planned route. It is not firmly necessarily he/she does this all himself. It is a middle-high professional level able to operate in an ample variety of contexts and with a high level of responsibility.

For sure, he/she is the “director of the intervention”, thinking of and putting in place an operative network (natural and informal) which collaborates with all the involved subjects in the construction of a personalized project aimed at the beneficiary.



He/she is able as well to coordinate the different approaches among the services network, between the different institutions and operators, to accompany the beneficiary in his path and to monitor and evaluate the results. It is about building and keep alive a network of acquaintances, of people and institutions. He is responsible of the case and guarantor of the person, activator and maintainer of the network.

He/she knows who to call for any particular approach, and he/she knows who is doing what. He/she is definitely the main actor and responsible of the intervention program. For these reasons, he is a professional profile with the adequate skills and competences necessarily to take decisions and coordinate the work of others, since he cannot do everything himself, but keeping the big picture of the intervention clear in his mind.

He/she concentrates in himself/herself different traditional profiles, such as those working in the field of training and education, labor and health and social care.

To sum up, he/she plays a role that acts as a bridge between different interventions, activated by different operators, but all aimed at the same path leading to the same result.

From the interviews, different interesting definitions of this role emerged: "a compass" that, starting from the beneficiary, puts everyone in the same network; "a team leader in touch with the boy"; "a relational guide"; "an open and flexible person, who takes in account the different competencies, coming from different knowledge"; "a binocular" used by the director who says: 'go, help him... I'll watch you'; "a mediator"; "a facilitator".

It is clear he/she plays a crucial role, and not even an easy one. In order to be sure that the intervention will be successful, it is necessarily that the Case Manager is not only a professional out of the team, "he has to live in the team". He/she is not a "superstructure", but a member of the team himself. This is crucial for two reasons:

- ⇒ Avoid creating more bureaucratic and hierarchical levels that could result in the slowing down of the working team;
- ⇒ By living the daily work of the team and of the case he gains the full knowledge and understanding of the needs, the resources and the dynamics involved.

The goal is to put in place different work modalities, able to avoid the traditional hierarchies and labor divisions. It does not mean to erase differences, and surely not responsibilities. The team has to be flexible, with a great capacity of interchanging roles, valorizing the different and complementary competencies.

The Case Manager is not chosen according to hierarchical characteristics, but the leader is the one who has the competencies necessarily to take care of a case in the most appropriate and professional way. He has not to propose a general package of answers, but he has to activate the network in order to elaborate a process. This can happen only if the different roles intervening and not touching each other develop into a team, able to intervene through a multisectoral approach.



Minimum skills

- Being in touch with the person and gathering information
- Analysing the situation: expectations, needs and potentialities of the person, resources
Building a network system of interlocutors and services, selecting the most adapt to answer to the particular needs of the person
- Coordinate and link the different roles involved
- Representing the needs of the person
- Defining objectives of the personalized process for inclusion and development, favoring the active participation of the person
- Controlling and monitoring the activities
- Evaluating the whole process

Basic and professionalizing abilities

- Principles of Social Farming: actors, types and models, sectors of intervention, thought and language
- Subjects to involve
- European, national and regional normative concerning Social Farming
- Legislation, regulation and organization of welfare
- "Timing" (of schools and of agriculture)
- Disabilities (biological, social and cultural characteristics)
- Different types of routes for different beneficiaries
- Principles and tools for monitoring and evaluating the programs
- Tools and actions necessary to obtain grants

Transversal abilities and competences

- Finding solutions
- Being able to listen
- Being able to negotiate
- Being able to build relations and manage them
- Being able to work on the territory
- Knowing to whom ask what
- Being able to organize the resources
- Knowing when to stop!
- Being able to tackle unexpected obstacles
- Being able to handle stress
- Being able to evaluate

We asked our interlocutors to use their imagination, thinking about a possible team and selecting the most professional profile fitting the role of Case Manager.

Even though a difference in the terminology emerged, someone calling the profile as "educator", someone else denying this definition, eventually the agreement was on the essence of this profile. No matter the nature of the professional, what is clear to all the interviewed interlocutors is the context of his approach: not a top-down type of educator, but an equal relation starting from a "person centered approach – individual" (as quoted by the Dutch report). Even though traditional hierarchical barriers are thus to be avoided, because too fixed to catch the complexity of this role, the Case Manager is the core center of the network, and as it is, he has to manage different worlds, being their bridge and putting them in touch themselves.



The family

Obviously, the family of the boy involved plays a very important role. The family is the first "training agency". In fact, the normative path of the last years suggests a growing involvement in the educative process of families. The family is the place where formal and informal education meet, it is an essential landmark for the right system of school inclusion for the person with disabilities.

The family can help the team to discover and empower the potentialities of the subject, helping to develop an "ad hoc" path. There are no standard pathways. It is true though, that the expectations of the family should be listened to and discussed.

The school

Another important "education agency" is certainly the school, which contributes to the physical, psychological and relational wellness of the person. The presence of a person with disabilities requires a reorganization of the system, but – if correctly faced – it could also lead to an occasion of general growth and improvement.

Intervention on students, especially if affected with disabilities, must be done by foresee a full involvement of the families, the school system, the social and/or healthcare services, associations. It is a difficult work to be operated in a network in a pathway that involves many institutional and not-institutional bodies operating in the local area.

It is, in fact, a widespread educational responsibility.

Speaking the same language

In order to work together, understanding each other is a basic requirement: only through communication can the person benefit from the network, which can only be assured by a positive relational context.

According to the interviews gathered, what is necessary to build this type of communication is: "openness, put each other on the same level, learn to unlearn."

Many of the interviewed interlocutors claimed the necessity for the interdisciplinary team to learn to understand each other and "speak the same language". For what concerns the reciprocal understanding, the necessity of opportunities for confrontation was underlined; while concerning the "language", many of the interviewed referred to the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health).

The ICF classification introduces a universal, global and inclusive approach to explain the well being and functioning of an individual. The innovation of ICF consists in a conceptual "revolution": the neutral value of the concept of disability, freeing it from a reductive characterization that linked it directly to a physical, sensory or intellectual limitation. Disability is not any more defined as a sickness or a disturb, but as a general condition that may result from a complex relation between one's health and the contextual factors in which he lives.

The classification can be a strong tool to enforce and improve the social work of the network, the confrontation within the multidisciplinary team, the collaboration between families and local communities, the school integration, the participation and social inclusion of people with disabilities.



Awareness and local activation

Dialogue, and understanding thus. The social farmer needs the opportunity to learn the disability, and the school must know what the farm can offer to the students. When and how to act, and when to stop, when the intervention of an operator with appropriate knowledge and abilities is needed to tackle any type of obstacles that may occur during the process of job placement.

Living a SF experience should be felt not as a remedy, but as a great opportunity to take. It is necessary to defeat possible resistances of parents toward the idea of seeing their son in a farm, instead than behind a desk. We should be able to explain that agriculture is not a weak and poor sector of the economy today, but instead a vanguard sector. To sum up, we need to: promote information activities, training, communication and territorial activation.

Critical points

To conclude, what emerges from the reports is a clear need analysis. Also clear is the role that the Case Manager should play, and what kind of complex approach should be adopted. Less clear is, however, from which source the Case Manager should be taken. Some pointed at an internal profile, improved with the required skills, some other pointed at an educator, or a professor, or a specialist in disabilities. The diversified solutions expressed is quite easily explained: as has been mentioned, every Social Farming experience is very different from any other, every experiences comes from a different context, different needs, and thus different solutions. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to adopt a flexible approach, finding case by case the appropriate profile to improve and develop into a Case Manager. It is difficult, and probably reductive, to frame this role into a specific profession or figure.

The Case Manager has to be considered as a complex process, leading to a professionalized figure, but starting from different points, according to the nature of the profile, taking care of the already existing professional settings in the different EU countries.