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## MANUAL FOR SETTING UP LOCAL CROSS SECTORAL NETWORKS

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### Version history

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## 1. Introduction: Why Networks?

IO 01 focuses on the development of a manual/toolkit how to set up a local/regional cross sectoral network between VET schools, schools for general education and local/regional authorities (WP 4 from the Handbook)

“Implementation of this toolkit will allow the partners to develop strategies for integration of Newcomers and to make VET more attractive to them” (text from Handbook WP 4)

In the NIK project, partners will organize all kind of activities, partly for themselves, partly together with their direct partners from other schools. As a result of these contacts, the school will organize multicultural cooking events.

Other examples of activities are Transnational Project Meetings (Alkmaar, Tartu, Venice and Berlin) and national Multiplier Events (= ME)

Partners have the task to show all these project results from NIK “to the world!” A good project has clear ideas for promotion and dissemination. These are also essential elements for the final evaluation of the project. See also WP 2.

This manual will give answers, suggestions, practical tips to set up these networks and to organize Multiplier Events (= ME) in order to disseminate the results.

This manual makes clear that setting up a network is related with promotion and dissemination. Even marketing and quality aspects are part of it.

This manual starts with the main characteristics of Communities of Practice (= CoP) in a connection to the NIK project. It will help the partners to set up or to enlarge a sufficient and sustainable local/regional cross sectoral network. A good functioning CoP gives access to potential partners in the implementation of activities and/or participants of ME's.

Theoretical aspects of CoP are presented and discussed; a historical and current consideration will be made. CoP from today's point and under consideration of the NIK-project will be present.

NB: This manual can also be useful for other projects.

Next, the results of a baseline survey will be given including conclusions and recommendations.

In chapter 4, practical tips for optimal promotion and dissemination of activities, such as ME's are described, followed by chapter 5 with five top tips for a successful event.

## 2. Community of Practice (CoP)

### 2.1. Community of Practice (CoP) – a historical and today's view

Communities of Practice (CoP) as a phenomenon started for many years; but the term itself was not coined until 1991 when Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger used it in their exploration of Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Situated learning is learning that takes place through working practices, for example, an apprenticeship where an employee learns skills "on the job". (Hildreth and Kimble)

Knowledge in society or in an organization appears in many different forms and is not limited to the "heads of the experts". New organisational structures in form of cooperation networks bring the same extent and speed produce new knowledge.

A CoP is not a network per se, no association, no project group.

The name stands for an informal group which organises itself. This group is fulfilled self-chosen purposes and determine their leadership itself. "Informally" means beyond structural and institutional contexts.

The CoP is distinguished primarily by the "common interest in a topic" of individuals or groups that meet virtually and physically. There is a practical exchange between participants, employees or stakeholders.

The aim is: employees are not only focused on knowledge from databases and experts; but to develop their resources, skills and creativity and create a more comprehensive knowledge transfer, which promotes new practices.

CoP is temporary; they "live" as long as the interest and the need for exchanges and the environment (in this case, the interest, and the interaction of the members) will be maintained. It can go to diverse topics: structuring or preparation of background information, questions / answers or experience or developing new knowledge, new practices. It is an important experience, which is a big barrier for missing changes to promote a better quality of school food in the absence of networking and collaboration of stakeholders.

As mentioned before, the concept was first proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger. He gave a definition of term CoP:

Every group that shares interest on a website is called a community today. But communities of practice are a specific kind of community. They are focused on a domain of knowledge and over time accumulate expertise in this domain. They develop their shared practice by interacting around problems, solutions, and insights, and building a common store of knowledge.

A CoP opens a way to cause organisational development and problem-solving skills on a specific topic under the conditions of complex systems of informal processes to exchange knowledge and resources.

Related to NIK: CoP brings together people and actors based on their own interests in solutions for the integration of Newcomers and to develop activities for teachers, students and organisation in their school, region or country. They operate largely self-organised with each other, exchange ideas and support each other. Important is the absence of introductory preambles of external orders, institutional bindings.

## **2.2. Community of Practice (CoP) – characteristic today**

Based on the definition of CoP, the following practical characteristic is formulated by Wenger:

A particular area of activity/body of knowledge/engagement that the CoP has organized itself. It is a joint enterprise continually renegotiated by its members.

### **How does it function?**

People become members of a CoP through shared practices; they are linked to each other through their involvement in certain common activities. It is mutual engagement that binds members of a CoP together as a social entity.

### **What has it produced?**

The members of a CoP build up an agreement about a set of communal resources. This "shared repertoire" of resources represents the material traces of the community. Written files can constitute a more explicit aspect of this common repository although more intangible aspects such as procedures, policies, rituals and specific idioms may also be included. (Wenger, 1998).

### **Common Ground**

The term Common Ground is taken from the work of Clark and Brennan (1991). For communication to take place certain information must be shared; this information is called common ground. Similarly, for a CoP to function the members need to be sympathetic to the ideas around which the group is based and will probably have a common background or share common a common interest.

### **Common Purpose/Motivation**

The CoP members will have some sort of common goal or common purpose and it is often the case that the CoP is internally motivated i.e. driven by the members themselves as opposed to some external driver.

### **Progress**

There is often some sort of progress in a CoP; it may be that the CoP has developed because of a common interest of a group of people. On the other hand, it may be that the CoP was a formally constituted group that has evolved into a CoP because of the relationships that have developed amongst the members.

### **Relationships**

This is a key part of a CoP and is what makes it possible for a team to become a CoP - as the informal relationships develop so the source of legitimation in the group shifts in emphasis. These relationships are a key to the issues of trust and identity in a CoP.

## Narration

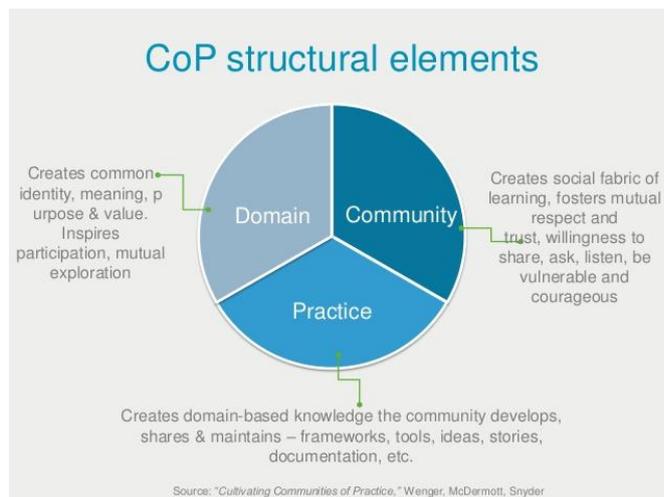
Narration (story telling) is very useful in both knowledge sharing and knowledge generation. In particular, a central part of the journey undertaken by the non-drinking alcoholics involved the telling of the story. The quality of the story became the mark of an old timer and therefore the source of the legitimation in the community.

## Formal or informal?

In many cases, a CoP is not a formally constituted group and membership is entirely voluntary. In some cases, the organization might not even be aware of its existence. In Lave and Wenger (1991), legitimacy was gained by being accepted and gaining informal authority through consensus within the group. This notion often sits uncomfortably with the more formal view of a CoP where simple domain knowledge or rank due to organizational hierarchy is seen as a source of authority.

## To launch a CoP

It is important for launching a CoP, to know the three structural features or dimensions of a CoP:



## "Domain or joint enterprise"

This is the content dimension. These include the common theme, projects (joint enterprise), as understood by the members and constantly renegotiated in the cooperation process.

## "Common, interrelated actions" – Community

Community means the relations of mutual commitment, which involve the members in a social entity of joint acting.

## "Ongoing Practice"

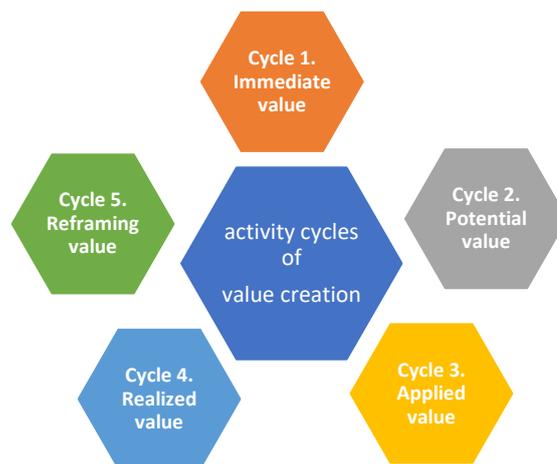
The shared repertoire of resources (fi. routines, vocabulary, etc.) produced by members to count for the dimension of established practice.

All three dimensions are depends on each other – like a circle. The interaction of all three dimensions leads to success. CoP show effects in different ways and with different scope.

A consideration of these different ways and to launch CoP also requires a clear methodological identification. Based on Wenger's concept of value assessment arguments for the effects of the activities of a CoP were found.

### Five intertwined cycles

For the following process five with each intertwined effect cycles of action can methodically identify:



#### **Cycle 1 Effect immediately:**

The activities and interactions between members in a CoP have a value in and of itself and is immediately effective.

#### **Cycle 2 Potential:**

The activities and interactions of cycle 1 cannot be implemented immediately, but exist as a resource, tool or knowledge capital whose value is stored in it. Its potential can be realised only later.

#### **Cycle 3: Applicableness:**

The resources created in the common practice require applying and adapting to a specific situation. It's principally available.

#### **Cycle 4 Realised value:**

Even applied new practices or tools are not enough. A change in practice does not necessarily lead to improved performance; it is important to find out which effects the application of knowledge capital can describe on the achievement of what matters to stakeholders.

#### **Cycle 5 Reframing:**

This occurs when the common practice causes a re-examination of how success is defined. It includes the reformulation of strategies, goals and values.

The clear conceptual approach of this intertwined effect cycles, its interplay allows the CoP to be aligned in such a way that they are successful.

### 3. Baseline Survey

#### Questionnaires

In order to have an overview of the relevant partner situation a baseline study has been carried out. All partners received a questionnaire with the request to send it back with the relevant information:

1. *Do your school have a regional network already?*
2. *What kind of partners?*
3. *Is your network complete?*
4. *What is missing?*
5. *How to find extra / missing partners?*
6. *Did you discuss the topic of Newcomers?*
7. *What results do you got?*
8. *Do you have concrete contacts with newcomers?*
9. *If yes, please describe it short!*
10. *Does this work with newcomers fit in your daily work?*
11. *What are your good practices?*
12. *What suggestions you have for the other partners in NIK?*

#### Result of questionnaires

The results of all questionnaires (n=8) are summarized. See below. Main conclusions are also given. NB: The complete text of the questionnaires can be found in the **Annex**.

1. *Do your school have a regional network already?*

yes	no
8	

2. *What kind of partners?*

Partner	yes
VET-school	5
General school	4
Others	4
Public authorities	5
Local/regional organisations	7
Others	5

Both questions show that all partners have developed a regional network; most of the partners come from the VET-schools and from the local / regional organisations.

3. *Is your network complete?*

yes	no
4	4

4. *What is missing?*

<b>partner</b>	<b>yes</b>
VET-school	3
General school	2
Other schools	1
Public authorities	4
Local/regional organisations	2
others	-

Both answers show that half of the partner countries think to have a complete network. Public authorities are missing in half of the answers. It shows that activities with Newcomers mostly re organised in schools and with local organisations.

5. *How to find extra / missing partners?*

<b>Possible by</b>	<b>yes</b>
Phone	6
Email	6
Meetings	6
Others	4

6. *Did you discuss the topic of Newcomers?*

<b>yes</b>	<b>No</b>
7	1

7. *What results do you got?*

All activities and experiences in the partner countries are different and with different results.

- Two categories of Newcomers (second generation and new refugees)
- Refugees go to school including VET, results are not good
- School try to find new ways to teach them
- Tailor-made programs for Newcomers, after that the goal is to use the regular school
- Attention for Newcomers decreases
- Newcomers are needed as skilled workers
- Validation of competences and skills for Newcomers is necessary
- Contact with primary school and VET school and special courses

8. Do you have concrete contacts with newcomers?

yes	no
5	3

9. If yes, please describe it short!

All activities of the partner countries focus on the education, language training and training on the job.

- Cooperation with associations for newcomers
- Schools have specific projects
- Internal school meetings with stakeholders
- Coaching classes for German language
- Coaching for training for the job
- Language courses in newcomers centers
- Cooperation with primary school for direct contact with newcomers

10. Does this work with newcomers fit in your daily work?

yes	no
5	3

11. What are your good practices?

The examples from the partner countries show differences from just starting up to implementation of project results. Contacts are mainly on local / regional level and not on national level.

- Coaching and tutoring
- BEAMS project to analyses perception and construction of stereotypes
- D'basket-project for developing a toolkit for educators about intercultural competences
- Combination of language learning, coaching and internships
- Libraries organized multicultural dinners

12. What suggestions you have for the other partners in NIK?

It is not only one solution to solve the problem. All these suggestions show that in the partner countries are a varied experiences and political orientation. A multiple approach is recommended.

- Build consensus on objectives and mobilize the right stakeholders
- Multiple activities: integration of language learning and apprenticeship (job)
- Make connection with cultural organization involved in integration of newcomers



## Conclusions and recommendations

### Main conclusion

The NIK approach will be useful. However, it has to be combined with other activities, such as additional language training and coaching of internships.

### Recommendations

- Strengthening of political awareness on local / regional and national level,
- Continuation of search for additional organizations active in the integration process of Newcomers,
- Especially for VET: search for companies which offer an internship for Newcomers,
- Outside of the partner countries, NIK may find additional good practices,
- The use of existing European networks can be useful.

## 4. Multiplier Events

### Multiplier Event

The official definition of a Multiplier Event: An event that is organized to share the Intellectual Outputs of a project with a wider audience.

The Multiplier Events (ME) can take place in a partner country. The need to organize a ME in a partner country has to be clearly justified and it must be linked to an Intellectual Output. The grant amount for organizing the ME (catering, location, technical equipment, etc.) is based on unit costs calculated. See your budget in the Handbook. It is only for external participants who are attending the event and not for project partners. Members of the partnership can take part in the ME, but receive no funding from this budget heading. However, they can combine their Transnational Project Meeting with a ME or use their budget for Project Management.

### Promotion of a Multiplier Event

If you are inviting journalists to an event, make sure someone is dedicated to looking after them who can answer their questions and ensure they speak to enthusiastic participants that are prepared to answer questions (see 'Interviews' below).

### Photography

Good quality, high resolution photographs of interesting and colorful activity can make all the difference to securing print or online press coverage. Make sure that you've got someone assigned to take pictures at any publicity-worthy events so you can send them to the local press (if they are not able to send their own photographer along). Brief your photographer to get interesting shots of activity, not just a line-up of people in suits!

Make sure that you have the relevant parental consent for under 18's and permission from everyone involved to use their photographs and quotes for the media. If the press uses your image, they may also need a caption from you, saying who is pictured. See also NIK document "Publications".

### Interviews

Prepare spokespeople to do interviews, which might take place either on the day if journalists attend your event, or on the phone. If you are doing an interview, think about what you want to say and how you can best get your key messages across. Think about the audience – they won't all be experts or familiar with your organization or field of education, training or the youth field so try not to use lots of acronyms or jargon! Do try to make a reference to Erasmus+ and your National Agency website so people can find out more about the program.

Pinpoint other spokespeople that have been involved (e.g. participants, teachers, youth workers, parents) and make sure they are prepared to answer questions about their experience and are clear on the key messages.

The interviews should not have more than 3-5 minutes. Questions should be formulated short, clear, interesting for the audience, friendly, open, believable, reliable.

### Short videos

Video should be developed for 30 – 90 seconds. They should focus on a goal, with short clear question and short answers; understandable, especially for social media.

## 5. Five top tips for a perfect Multiplier Event

Here are some top tips to think about when writing and sending your release to make sure you get the maximum impact.

### 1. Who, what, where, when?

Journalists will always want to make sure they have all the facts, so try and cover all the key details for your project, even if they seem simple.

### 2. A picture says a thousand words

Photographs improve your visual impact and help to tell your story. It is important that you also include all names of participants that are on the photo (and make sure that you get a signed consent form for you to use the photo. Attach both a jpeg version and a PNG of the photo, so that the newspaper can easily compose the lay-out of the article.

### 3. Choose your timing

Try to send your release earlier in the week, as this is when editors will be meeting to plan that week's content. A Monday morning is a good time to send. Forget Friday afternoons as its likely your message could get missed. Remember newsrooms are busy places, so don't forget to follow-up your release with a phone call to make sure it's been received.

### 4. Best way to send

The simpler and clearer your release and photos are to access, the better. If you're sending the release via email, send it to the media outlet's news editor or news desk email address. If you know the name of the reporter who covers your specific area, include these too. As well as attaching your release as a Word document, you can also copy and paste the text into the body of the email, so the journalist can see your story as soon as it comes into their inbox.

### 5. Local governmental departments

To raise the profile of your project within your press release inform your local government; not only does this keep them informed about what funding goes into their constituencies but they sometimes use these examples in their own work. If you get media coverage for your Erasmus+ activity, please inform other partners and your own National Agency.

## 6. Used Sources

Wenger, Etienne (1998): Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity

Lesser, L.E.; Storck, J. (2001): Communities of Practice and organizational performance

Hildreth, Paul and Kimble, Chris: Knowledge Networks: Innovation through Communities of Practice

Wenger, Etienne: Cultivating communities of practice – a guide to manage knowledge

Kimble C., Hildreth P. and Wright P. (2001): Communities of Practice: Going Virtual  
Harvard Business Review: Snapshot Comparison Communities of practice

TOL: Taste of Life, regional, healthy food in schools (Project-number: 2014-1-NL01-KA202-001225)

Intellectual Output 01: Activity O-1/A-1 “Manual Managing Tool”, Chapter 2 - Marketing strategies

Basic information about Multiplier Events: <https://www.erasmusplus.org.uk/glossary>