



THE MISSING LINK. A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR PROFESSIONALS

A Practical Guide for Developing Communities of Practice
in Public and Private Institutions

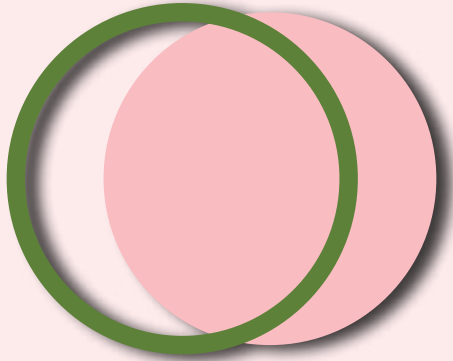
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WHY THIS GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE?

'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly'

Etienne Wenger¹

For over two decades, the Association for Liberty and Equality of Gender - A.L.E.G. has been working to promote gender equality and the protection of vulnerable people, by offering counselling services, organizing information campaigns, specialized interventions and educational and training programmes.

In recent years, exploitation and human trafficking risks among vulnerable youth have visibly gone up. According to the data published by the Romanian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (ANITP)², 610 victims were identified in 2024,

¹ Etienne Wenger-Trayner - https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Communities%20of%20practice%20within%20and%20across%20organisations_%20A%20guidebook.pdf

² 2024 Annual Report on Human Trafficking - <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/raport-anual-privind-fenomenu-trafficului-de-persoane-in-2024/>

about 35% more than in 2023³, and 75% of them were sexually exploited. In the first six months of 2025⁴, 326 victims were notified, many of them minors and women.

So, it is clear that current interventions are often fragmented and insufficiently coordinated.

In response to these challenges, between August 2023 and March 2025, A.L.E.G. implemented the project *'Effective Prevention of Exploitation and Human Trafficking among Vulnerable Youth'*, an experience that proved that individual interventions are not enough and that a stable framework for cooperation and learning for all the stakeholders involved is necessary.

Therefore, in 2025, A.L.E.G. launched the project *'The Missing Link: Effective Stakeholder Cooperation for the Prevention of Human Trafficking among Vulnerable Youth'* as a continuation of our previous efforts. This initiative was aimed at creating a Community of Practice (CoP), i.e. a common working space dedicated to professionals working in the field who represent public institutions, social services, NGOs, child protection, education and youth services, with a view to improving the design and implementation of prevention measures.

Local consultations confirmed a real need: practitioners, social workers, psychologists, teachers, police officers, school counsellors, mediators, NGO representatives want a platform for constant communication, case discussions, solution sharing, and devising joint tools. Communities of practice do not replace existing formal mechanisms, but rather complete them by ensuring a flexible space dedicated to collaboration and continuous learning.

This need arises from the lack of consistent coordination between institutions, the differences in capacity and resources at local level and the ever-growing complexity of cases. By developing a CoP, A.L.E.G. aimed to both ensure a more coherent community response and build a long-term, adaptable mechanism that can be replicated nationally.

The CoP pilot in the county of Sibiu, carefully documenting the process and developing easy-to-adapt tools are key steps to turning this model into a good practice that can support and inspire other communities around the country. Communities of Practice offer an environment in which professionals can learn from each other, strengthen their skills and develop solutions adapted to situations on the ground. However, for CoPs to work properly, they need clear

³ 2023 Annual Report on Human Trafficking - <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/raport-anual-privind-fenomenul-traficului-de-per-soane-in-2023/>

⁴ Statistics about the victims identified in the first semester of 2025 - <https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/situatie-statistica-privind-victimele-identificate-in-primul-semestru-al-anului-2025/>

principles and constant support. The purpose of this guide is to support this process, by offering theoretical references and real-world examples.

The Guide structure reflects both theoretical groundwork and practical implementation.

Chapter 1

outlines the main elements needed to develop a Community of Practice, by presenting theoretical groundwork, key concepts, working principles and the design of a CoP.

Chapter 2

shows the concrete implementation of the model in the county of Sibiu, highlighting the way in which we adapted theory to local particularities as well as how flexible steps and tools can be replicated in other contexts.

Chapter 3

looks at what happens after the pilot stage, drawing directions for the consolidation, extension and integration of the CoP into institutional structures, so as to ensure it becomes a sustainable mechanism for interinstitutional cooperation and innovation.

Chapter 4

is a collection of complementary tools: guides, document templates, and addenda including materials meant to support CoP meeting planning and unfolding. Here, you will find logistics documents, research and feedback tools, as well as addenda including worksheets and practical exercises for reflection and individual practice.

This instrument is meant to inspire both social workers, prevention decision-makers and practitioners and to encourage them to get involved in such communities. By doing so, professionals will broaden their horizon beyond their own field of expertise and solidify their professional identity through collaboration and exchange of experience.



MESSAGE FROM A SURVIVOR: WHY COPS MATTER

From my point of view as a survivor, human trafficking begins not when you are exploited, but when you are vulnerable without anyone noticing. I was not taken by force and all of a sudden. I was listened to, understood and then shaped into what they wanted me to become. He knew exactly what I was lacking: affection, validation, security. And he offered me exactly that from the very beginning.

Manipulation does not hurt at start, but rather looks like love and support. You feel like somebody is finally seeing you. Then, he starts being controlling, but slowly, unnoticeably. You drift apart from friends, family and other people who may notice. You start believing he is right while everyone else is wrong. You believe you are nothing without him. You live in fear for so long that you start to believe you deserve it and shame becomes your identity. You end up wondering whether you are the problem. And you don't talk about it, not even to a professional. Because you are afraid, you've been threatened, you've been told nobody will believe you and you are ashamed.

I have seen several specialists. Not because I was looking for help, but because life brought me to them. Not one saw through my behaviour. They saw my reactions, but not my trauma. They didn't see my fear. Didn't understand that emotional dependence is part of the machination.

I believe a community of practice is a necessity because several well-prepared people can make a difference, while an unprepared system can miss the signs time and again.



Human trafficking is not a simple crime. It's a deep psychological process, that involves identity annihilation and complex trauma. When the police officer doesn't understand the trauma, the psychologist doesn't understand the dynamics of manipulation, the social worker is not aware of how grooming works, the educator doesn't know what traumatic attachment looks like, they each see a fragment of the story.

I felt that professionals were able to truly help me when they listened without judging, and did not force me into telling them more than I was ready to reveal, when they created a safe environment before asking me for the truth, worked together to offer me coherent support, were aware of their own limits, and asked for help when they needed it.

Looking back, I now know that prevention work starts much earlier. It's not enough to simply talk to children about 'traffickers and victims'. We have to explain to them what healthy relationships look like, how to recognise manipulation, how love can be used as a control instrument, about personal boundaries, how to identify too-good-to-be-true promises, about online safety and who to talk to when something isn't right.

Most of the time, vulnerable children need not just information, but adults who are there for them, who notice changes in them, who ask questions gently and never give up on them. They need the constant presence of an adult, real support and trust, so as to feel safe and find the courage to talk when something is off.

In my case, it would have made a difference if somebody had understood that what looked like a choice was in fact a battle for survival. If somebody had seen the fear behind my composure and offered support with no judgement, patiently and truly. A Community of Practice means saving children is no longer left to chance. It is joint responsibility, collaboration, vigilance, so that no one else goes through what I've lived for the system to learn its lesson. Had somebody understood me back then, my journey would have been much shorter. I am telling you all this today to shorten somebody else's journey.

Value this community, get involved, collaborate and be there. Everyone deserves to be seen, heard, listened to and protected before it's too late.



GENERAL ASPECTS

Communities of Practice are a valuable setting for learning, exchange of experience and professional development. In order for CoPs to be effective, we need to have a clear picture of the principles underlying their creation and evolution.

This chapter is an overview of the groundwork necessary for a Community of Practice, the main components in their organisation and the factors that ensure that they work and remain sustainable. This chapter aims at offering a solid foundation for anyone who wishes to set up or consolidate a community of practice in a specific institutional or interinstitutional context.

1.1. Groundwork for a Community of Practice

What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?

A community of practice is a group of people who share professional roles, have common responsibilities or fields of activity and who regularly collaborate to meet common objectives.

Main principles:

- regular interactions between members;
- focusing on common objectives and real needs;
- continuous learning and information exchange.

For instance, when a group of practitioners in an institution voluntarily set up a series of regular meetings to learn about a certain field of activity, share their experience and exchange knowledge, they start to develop a common understanding of the problems they are dealing with (*domain*), all the while developing certain ways to interact (*community*) and identities based on their regular exchanges (*practice*). This type of collaborative learning can take place both within an organization and between several organizations.

Understanding members' needs

For CoPs to be successful, before selecting work platforms or tools, it is necessary to get an understanding of who members are and what their needs are.

Useful questions

- *Who is part of the community?*
- *Who else should be part of the community?*
- *What are their objectives and how can the community support these?*
- *How are community activities integrated into their daily work?*

It is essential to understand who are the people involved before selecting work platforms or tools.

Please mind that, when starting to set up a Community of Practice, certain approaches may limit its development, e.g.:

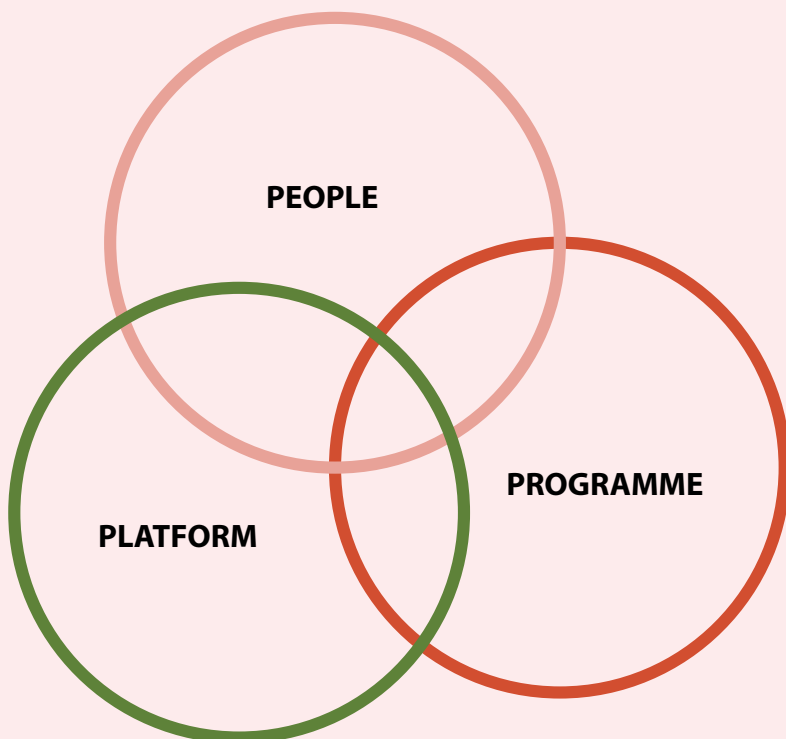
- 1. Starting with technology** - An online platform is nothing more than a tool; the community can be set up without it. Starting with technology may distract attention from people and purpose.
- 2. 'Build it and they will come'** - Simply launching a community does not guarantee participation. You need to invite people, motivate and encourage members by constantly highlighting the benefits.

3. 'Good communities are self-governed' - The truth is, a mature community can be self-sustainable, but the facilitator/coordinator's role remains essential to support members and ensure continuous growth.

1.2. CoP Design

After clarifying groundwork, the next step is getting a concrete understanding of how to organize and support the community. A Community of Practice is based on three interdependent pillars: **people** (community members and nonformal leaders), **programme** (activities, events, and interaction frequency), and **platform** (online and offline collaboration spaces). Balancing these three pillars ensures the effective functioning of CoPs.

Figure 1. CoP Design⁵



⁵ Community development handbook - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-development-handbook/community-development-handbook>

People

Members are at the core of a community. In order to understand how this pillar works, we have to look at three key aspects: **belonging criteria, member management, and role distribution**. These are the mechanisms for the community's internal cohesion and dynamics.

- **Belonging criteria** clearly determine who may become a member.
- **Member management** includes inviting new members, stimulating engagement and explaining decisions to exclude members.
- **Community roles:**
 - **New members** - undergoing integration and familiarising themselves with the community;
 - **Engaged users/Catalysts** - influence the group and stimulate engagement;
 - **Leaders/Key guest experts** - manage the community and act as conduct/learning models;
 - **Passive members:** need to be encouraged to actively contribute;
 - **Trolls and troublemakers:** have to be managed to keep the community at peace.

Key aspects about people engagement

- *Who is part of the community and who is responsible for it?*
- *How can someone join the community?*
- *How can members identify who is engaged?*
- *Are there different roles and clearly defined responsibilities?*
- *Who is responsible for community success and development?*

To better understand member involvement, use the 'community membership' model below, which shows the different engagement levels in a Community of Practice and acts as a framework for setting realistic expectations. It is normal for members not to engage equally and this does not erode the value of the community. The model illustrates how to organise members, the responsibilities of each level and their contribution to the good functioning of the community, and so helps us understand roles, level of engagement and the responsibility flow.

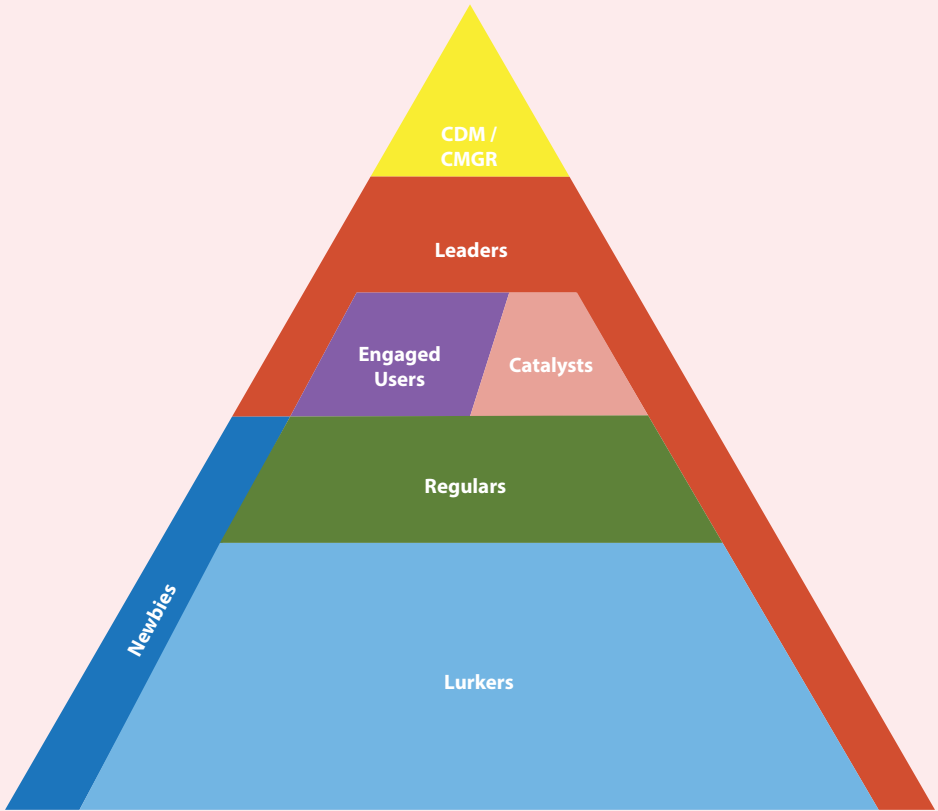
Top: coordinators/facilitators/community managers

Higher level: leaders and engaged users/catalysts

Medium level: regulars

Base: lurkers

Figure 2. Community Membership Model⁶



Programme

A structured programme helps the community reach its objectives and stick to a rhythm. Activities can be organized on several levels:

- **daily activities:** interactions, announcements, questions;
- **weekly activities:** online sessions, informal meetings;
- **monthly/bi-monthly/quarterly activities:** in-person events, informal events, open workshops;
- **annual events:** monitoring, reports, lessons learnt.

Facilitator/Coordinator/Community Manager role:

- design and stick to the programme;
- initiate and facilitate activities;

⁶ Community development handbook- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-development-handbook/community-development-handbook>

- revise and distribute a meeting schedule;
- invite key experts to answer to member needs;
- create a ‘community health assessment tool’.

Platforms

Platforms support interaction and collaboration, but cannot replace communities.

- **Platform examples:** forums, email lists, virtual spaces (Google Drive), social network groups and pages, private Facebook, LinkedIn, or WhatsApp groups, etc.
- **Important platform functions:** discovery and visibility, information sharing, exchange of good practices and resources, facilitating collaboration, activity archiving and tracking, coordination of activities between organizations.

Platform checklist - What to look for?

- The platform is easily accessible to all the members.
- The platform ensures privacy and adjustable settings.
- The platform is easy-to-use and integrate with other tools.
- The platform supports assessment tool tracking.

3. Contributing factors to CoP functioning and sustainability

Once the Community of Practice has been built (*people, programme and platform*), it is vital to understand which are the factors that keep it functioning in the long run. A well-defined structure is not enough on its own, as *relationship dynamics, quality interactions* and *capacity to adapt* have a direct impact on the community's survival.

Here are the elements that ensure a CoP's consolidation, effective functioning and sustainability.

Confidentiality and security

To create a safe space for learning and exchange of experience, you need clear rules about:

- private, semi-private and public information;
- means of communication;
- mutual respect;
- sensitive data protection.

Having clear rules increases member comfort and engagement.

In-person activities

In-person or hybrid meetings strengthen relationships and facilitate complex discussions.

Recommended activity formats:

- **informal meetings:** members create the agenda;
- **show&tell:** members present their work and experiences, talk;
- **key guests:** experts with relevant points on view on the member needs.

Frequency decided jointly, keeping distances and availability in mind.

Activities and behaviours for success

This is a list of recommended activities and behaviours to ensure a successful Community of Practice, illustrating what community managers and members should do to keep the community active, secure and productive:

- appreciate and recognise contributions;
- engage the community in the development of activities;
- accept and integrate new members;
- encourage passive members to gradually engage;
- create a safe collaborative environment;
- share ideas and challenges without the fear of being judged.

What makes a successful community of practice?

A successful community of practice implies not only creating a CoP, but carefully designing and supporting it. Research shows that certain key principle contribute to developing an effective CoP, promoting learning, collaboration and exchanging good practices. Staempfli et al. (2016)⁷ describes nine design principles underlying the development and success of a CoP.

⁷ Resources for Managers of Practice Supervisors: Developing a community of practice in your organisation - https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/152mrkwm/sts_pt_developing_a_community_of_practice_in_your_org_final.pdf



1. **Organic evolution** – The community develops in time, adapts naturally, with no rigid structures.

2. **Internal and external dialogue** - encourages the exchange of ideas among members and offers resources or experts from outside the community.

3. **Participation at various levels** - Members may engage in different ways and at different intensity levels; all forms of engagement are valued.

4. **Right rhythm** - Meetings and activities must ensure cohesion and energy levels without overloading members.

5. **Public and private meeting spaces**

- Combine open talks with small-group meetings to strengthen social relations.

6. **Familiar and stimulating activities** - Striking a balance between comfort-zone and challenging activities maintains engagement and creativity.

7. **Focus on benefits and domain** - The community stays focused on the common interest and creates value for members and organizations.

8. **Support and sponsorship** - Clear facilitation and resources support the functioning and organization of the CoP.

9. **Community gardener** - Someone who entertains the community, encourages engagement and ensures meetings are dynamic.

Impact and sustainability

Tracking the Community's progress helps adjust the strategy and ensures sustainability.

What should you monitor/evaluate?

- Community size and growth
- Member structure and diversity
- Level of engagement and activity impact
- Member satisfaction levels
- Testimonials

By tracking progress, you have a tool to evaluate and adjust the community strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN SIBIU: GROUNDWORK AND KEY STEPS

We adapted the framework of the Community of Practice to the context of the county of Sibiu starting from the question ***How can a Community of Practice support learning and exchange of knowledge and skills?*** and inspired by the British implementation model. This chapter shows how we laid the foundation of the Sibiu CoP.

Our professional experience in the context of the county of Sibiu pointed to the fact that traditional learning solely based on classes or training courses had clear limits. Lifelong professional development is often poorly connected to the reality that practitioners deal with every day and transferring knowledge from training to practice is difficult and often inefficient. Not even the trainings that are adapted

to local needs can guarantee sustainable changes, as organizational culture, constraints in the field and bureaucracy have a stronger impact on daily practice than the knowledge accumulated during such courses.

Against this background, the Sibiu Community of Practice was designed as a complementary alternative which offers a real setting for continuous learning and local collaboration. Unlike traditional trainings, the CoP offered a space in which members could start from concrete problems they encountered in their daily activity and directly integrate various types of know-how, experiences and viewpoints in their professional work. This process was supported by key guests who were expressly invited to facilitate thematic workshops and become relevant local resources in the Community. Interactive workshops aimed at stimulating talks on key topics in order to prevent abuse, exploitation and human trafficking, promote the exchange of ideas and useful resources for interventions and support members to streamline their daily activity, as detailed below.

The Role Played by a Community of Practice in Supporting Local Interdisciplinary Teams or Other Formal Institutional Cooperation Structures

Despite being a non-regulated structure and based on voluntary participation, the Community of Practice plays an important role in facilitating collaboration between professionals and institutions, and collaboration is legally mandatory in policies meant to prevent the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable groups. Through a constant exchange of experience, good practices and implemented solutions, the CoP can support the activity of formal structures, including of the Local Interdisciplinary Team coordinated by the Sibiu General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection, set up through Government Decision no. 49-2011 on the prevention and multidisciplinary intervention in situations of violence against children and domestic violence, as well as in cases of exploitation and other forms of abuse. At the same time, the CoP may issue recommendations based on direct experience in the field, thus contributing to better interinstitutional cooperation and more efficient child protection interventions.

Besides the minimum membership stipulated in the regulatory framework of the local interdisciplinary team, other professionals may be called in, including CoP members who can add value to the interventions thanks to their skills, experience and vocation. By including these specialists, the multidisciplinary team benefits from a broader support network. Intersectoral collaboration is thus strengthened and responses are better adapted to children's needs. Depending on the case, the intervention network may include teachers, forensic physicians, specialized therapists, probation counsellors, lawyers, religious actors, children's carers and contact points.

2.1. Groundwork for the development of the Community of Practice

Members

As the coordinator of the project 'The Missing Link', A.L.E.G. played a central role in organizing and facilitating the meetings of the Community of Practice. In partnership with the Sibiu General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection, the Sibiu CoP engaged practitioners who work in family-type residential homes in the child protection system and emergency centres, as well as professionals working in various institutions and NGOs involved in child protection and preventing human trafficking among vulnerable groups (see Annex 1). Of the 16 practitioners who expressed interest, 9-11 people were actively involved and constantly took part in the scheduled meetings, significantly contributing to the debates and the development of the CoP. The CoP includes social workers, educators, psychologists, psycho-pedagogues, school mediators and youth workers, as well as experts and guests specialized in the psycho-social and medical sectors, who add additional expertise and support.

To encourage members to gradually take initiative, we appointed a peer community leader/facilitator who played an active role in the logistics of meetings, documenting discussions and processes, and constantly providing relevant resources after each session. Their contribution was crucial, as they had detailed knowledge about members' particular context and about the needs of the beneficiaries of the prevention activities.

Throughout the process of developing the Community of Practice, we constantly integrated the viewpoint of a human trafficking survivor, thus streamlining the approach of key topics about preventing and combating trafficking and getting an in-depth understanding of the realities and challenges faced by those affected by this phenomenon.

Moreover, the practical activities used during the meetings were presented by the peer community leader to a group of youngsters living in family-type residential homes in the child protection system to make sure that they were in line with their needs. In parallel, as part of the same context, we drafted a Youth Toolkit with ready-to-use interactive activities .(link către YouthToolkit)

CoP Structure and Organization

From the very beginning, CoP members decided on a series of basic rules and values meant to support a safe collaborative space, as well as a dedicated timeslot for their meetings: 2-3-hour bi-monthly meetings on Tuesdays or Thursdays between 9 a.m. and 11.30 a.m. The CoP meetings were mainly organized in-person to ensure relationship-building and in-depth debates. When guest experts were from a different city, the meetings took place online, thus ensuring access to relevant expertise and the continuity of CoP activities.

The *CoP rules* make up a clear coherent framework in support of member collaboration, trust and active engagement. The rules set out the CoP's purpose and objectives, roles and participation criteria, confidentiality, mutual respect, meeting timelines, communication channels, work methods and progress indicators. At the same time, the rules establish how to organize information, collect feedback and manage problematic behaviours, thus creating an inclusive environment allowing for continuous learning and exchange of good practices.

The set of rules of the Sibiu CoP and ways to implement these. Example.

1. Purpose and objectives – Clarify the aim of the CoP: *improving knowledge on human trafficking prevention and raising awareness and developing young people's abilities to deal with risky situations.*

2. Roles and participation criteria - Define who may participate and each person's responsibilities: *the peer community leader coordinates meetings, members contribute by sharing their experiences and suggesting activities, topics for discussions and guest experts.*

3. Confidentiality and mutual respect - Ensure a safe space for open talks: *All the discussions are confidential and no aggressive or insulting comments are allowed.*

4. Meeting timeslots and communication channels - Ensure predictability and continuity: *We meet in-person twice a month on Tuesdays or Thursdays; when a guest expert is not in Sibiu, that meeting takes place on Zoom; for quick communication, we use a private WhatsApp group.*

5. Work methods and progress indicators - Allow for active engagement and progress monitoring: *each workshop/meeting includes practical activities and we monitor progress through feedback; all this is implemented together with the beneficiaries.*

6. Organizing information and collecting feedback - Maintain structure and stay adapted to member needs: *meeting minutes are centralized and, after every meeting, members fill in a short online evaluation form (see Annex 4 and Annex 5).*

7. Managing problematic behaviours - Prevents conflicts and maintains an inclusive space: *when conflicts arise, the facilitator acts swiftly and those involved are supported to reach constructive solutions.*

8. Active and responsible engagement - All members commit to regularly participating in meetings and actively contribute to debates and activities: *members who frequently miss meetings are contacted to understand their reasons and encouraged to keep getting involved.*

Communication platforms and channels used by the Community of Practice

We defined a clear communication and collaboration system to support member engagement and ensure an efficient flow of information. Quick informal communication was set up via a WhatsApp group in which members were able to ask questions, share ideas or ask for specific support. At the same time, important information, decisions and official documents were emailed to members, thus offering a formal archived framework for later reference.

To improve access to resources and facilitate continuous learning, all the relevant materials were stored in a joint online space available to all members. This space ensures not only equal constant access to information, but also allows for a regular updating with new resources and changes in the field. Therefore, the communication system and the resource platform ensure an organized, transparent, collaborative framework that is essential for the development and consolidation of the Community of Practice.


2.2. Member Commitment in the CoP


In recognition of the members' engagement and commitment, participants to the Sibiu CoP meetings were able to formally join the CoP by signing a Participation and Confidentiality Agreement. This form establishes a framework for collaboration, protects the sensitive information discussed in the CoP and highlights members' responsibilities, thus ensuring a safe, ethical and professional environment for professional dialogue and mutual learning. (see Annex 2).


2.3. Interactive Workshops in the Community of Practice: Responding to Practitioners' Real Needs


Interactive workshops were designed in response to the needs identified from the very first meeting, starting from the real challenges members face in their every-day activity. To prevent human trafficking, it is of utmost importance that we understand vulnerability factors that keep minors vulnerable. In parallel, we drew up a list of experts in the local community who were to be invited to support the CoP in developing in-depth knowledge of the relevant topics for their practice. Before each workshop in which a key guest was invited, CoP members filled in an online form meant to centralize their questions and the topics they wanted the expert to discuss. This way, guests were able to adapt their content and working method based on members' real needs, thus ensuring that the information they presented was relevant and applicable. Therefore, each workshop turned into a customized learning space based on practitioners' daily challenges, combining theory and practice, applied exercises and interactive talks to facilitate collaborative applied learning. (see Annex 3)


Between September 2025 and March 2026, the Sibiu Community of Practice organized a series of workshops aimed at the professional development of practitioners working with vulnerable youth, on topics such as child protection, trauma management, financial education, health, but also placing an emphasis on practitioner wellbeing and refinding the motivation to continue their work while also looking after themselves. Below, you will find a brief description of these workshops; some of these also included practical exercises, as detailed in the annexes.


 The first workshop, **'Groundwork of a Community of Practice'**, kicked off a safe collaborative setting by offering participants the possibility to share their experience and reflect on the challenges they faced at work every day. Thus, we met participants needs to learn from and support each other, while also uncovering new needs, such as regular connection between colleagues and access to a mix of resources and thematic sessions for broadened development.


 The second workshop, **'Invisible Wounds - Trauma and Needs'**, brought a detailed viewpoint on the impact of early trauma on institutionalized children, giving participants an in-depth understanding over children's emotional and behavioural responses, as well as tools for customized interventions. During this workshop, we identified new needs to practice intervention strategies and develop additional practical tools.


 The workshop '**Communities of Practice for the Protection of Vulnerable Minors. A British Example**' helped participants understand the vulnerabilities of children trafficked in Great Britain and the manipulation mechanisms traffickers use, and gave them a comparative view over the British and the Romanian protection systems. Participants acquired practical knowledge through visual and interactive activities and highlighted the need to improve the national system so as to ensure a more efficient response to children's needs.


 The workshop **Open Talks about Our Bodies, Relationships, Limits, and Reproductive Health** offered a space safe for talks on how to communicate with children and young people about their body, relationships, and sexual health. Guided by a gynaecologist, participants explored ways to provide correct, age-appropriate information, highlighting the role played by early sexual education in prevention and in children's healthy development. Additionally, free family planning resources and services were presented.


 The interactive workshop **Financial Education: Relationship with Money** and **Preparing for the Future** explored the relationship with money and the role played by financial education in the development of young people's autonomy. Participants reflected on their own beliefs around money and discussed ways to support vulnerable youth to develop healthy financial habits. Moreover, the workshop introduced methods and resources on working with youth, organizing workshops on budgeting and saving, etc.


 The workshops '**Interventions with Human Trafficking Survivors and Prevention Strategies for Youth**' and '**Introduction to Safeguarding**' gave participants the chance to further their knowledge of measures to protect vulnerable children and youth, prevent exploitation and assume collective responsibility for creating an inclusive safe environment. Participants acquired both practical know-how and got an improved picture of the complexity of the situations faced by people exposed to human trafficking, showing a continuous need for resources and guidelines for the implementation of protection principles in various organizational contexts.


 The workshop '**Navigating the Complexity of Life. From Dependence to Autonomy in the Teenage Years**' pointed out the teenagers' need to be seen, listened to and respected, highlighting that an efficient intervention is built on relationships and on being present, not on control. Participants explored the importance of understanding the meaning of behaviours, valuing autonomy and on engaging the teenager in the decision-making process, as well as the need to strike a balance between boundaries and sympathy, supported by the expert's self-compassion.

 The workshop ***'My Supportive Inner Space: Presence, Creativity and Recovery in Care Work'*** gave practitioners a setting to reflect on the balance between professional responsibilities and protecting their personal resources. Using the lamp metaphor in the story 'Lucia and the Secret of the Lamp' (see Annex 13), participants understood the difference between authentic dedication and debilitating sacrifice, identified energy draining and recharging sources and practiced setting healthy boundaries through somatic and creative exercises. At the end of the workshop, participants made anchoring collages and set new intentions, emphasising that self-care is a professional responsibility.

 During the following workshops, attendees explored essential themes for their relational practice and social interventions. The workshop ***'Stereotypes, Forms of Violence and Microaggressions'*** allowed members to understand how stereotypes shape relationships, leading to exclusion, tensions or aggressive behaviours, while the practical exercises helped them identify toxic patterns and build safe, sympathetic, respectful interactions. The same approach continued in the workshop ***'What Is and How to Recognize Help'***, in which participants discuss the concept of help in social interventions in detail and reached the conclusion that not any well-meaning support generates positive effects. They identified dynamics such as dependence, control, over-responsibility or invalidation, i.e. what we call false help, and worked on developing their capacity to assist the beneficiary in becoming autonomous and self-responsible without causing power imbalances.


 The link between stereotypes, identifying false help and efficient support was further debated in the workshop ***'Guiding Career Conversations - Stages, Tools and Steps', which consolidated specialists'*** competences on career guidance. The discussions about self-knowledge, correlating to the labour market, building experience and preparing for an interview showed attendees how to provide concrete help responsibly in a way that's adapted to beneficiaries' needs, while striking a balance between support and autonomy.


 The workshop ***'Safeguarding: Actively Preventing Bias in Our Work with Vulnerable People'*** underscored that, by ensuring safety, we protect vulnerable people from abuse or neglect. This is crucial to a safe environment. Participants have learned to identify risks, apply good practices through codes of conducts and trainings, and promote an organizational culture of responsibility, with clear reporting procedures and engaging everyone involved to prevent prejudice.


 Not least, the workshop ***'On Personal and Team Power when Working with Systems'*** offered members a chance to reflect on the systems they are part of and on how interactions, flexible thinking, appreciation and gratitude impact personal power and team dynamics. Participants processed the main ideas that arose from the dissemination meeting and identified concrete ways of action to turn them into practical steps for the future.

Overall, the series of workshops successfully responded to the learning, support and collaboration needs of CoP members and encouraged reflection, exchanges of experience and concrete implementation. At the same time, new challenges and needs were discovered, such as the **need for constant meetings, intervision and supervision, resources adapted to the local context, custom intervention strategies, and continuous support to maintain their emotional and professional balance.**

Examples of Exercises and Practical Activities in which CoP Members Took Part during the Workshops

 **Exercise: Money value in time** (See Annex 6). Participants work through a worksheet on their own to identify their *essential needs (needs)* and *optional expenses (wants)* and convert their money in working time. This activity raises their awareness on the difference between needs and wants, the impact of small repetitive expenses, making them reflect on their own financial choices in a safe environment, free of any judgement, and with the possibility of sharing their experience with the group if they wish so. In the end, participants draw personal conclusions by writing down answers to questions such as: *What's most surprising when I convert money into time? and What would I change if my expenses were measured in hours of work, not amounts of money?* This step helps frame the exercise and raises people's awareness of their own financial patterns.


 **Exercise: Beliefs around money** (See Annex 7). Participants are guided through an individual reflection process about their beliefs around money that were shaped when they were children, starting from messages they heard and behaviours they saw in their family. For instance: *How did your mother/father see money? What money related behaviours did you witness as a child? What do your friends think about money?* Participants fill in a worksheet to identify present-day limitative beliefs, evaluate their impact on the financial decisions they make and practice turning these into positive ideas. The activity includes a small personal conclusion which can be shared within a small group, thus supporting people's awareness of their own patterns, reducing self-judgement, and learning by exchanging views in a safe, pressure-free environment.


 **Exercise: Resetting your relationship with money. Setting personal financial standards** (See Annex 8). Participants are guided through a reflection on the relationship they want to have with money, focusing not on ideal amounts or abstract objectives, but on personal financial standards and concrete behaviours. Through visualization techniques and using a worksheet, they find out what causes them to lose control over money most often, which are the situations in which they tend to spend impulsively or to be out of touch with their finances, and what they


could do differently in the future. In this process, participants select 2-3 simple daily or weekly actions (such as recording their expenses, stopping before making an impulsive buy or setting small amounts of money aside) with a view to bringing them closer to the standard they set out to meet and to a better future relationship with money. This activity helps people get a higher level of control, responsibility and ownership. Participants may share thoughts in pairs.

 **Exercise: Body awareness and self-regulation through guided observation.**


Participants are asked to focus on their own body in order to develop their awareness of bodily sensations and the physical manifestation of bodily sensations. Through a careful, non-critical observation process, they learn to identify the signals their body sends about their emotional and stress levels. This exercise develops self-regulation, allows people to be more present, and sows more self-empathy and kindness.


 **Exercise: Drawing your body - body tension awareness** (See Annex 9.). This exercise guides participants to explore how their body feels and identify the areas where tension, discomfort or stiffness accumulates. Participants draw a human body and use colours to mark the level of tension they feel (green for relaxed areas, yellow/orange for mild tensions and red for high tension points); thus, they identify and differentiate the sensations in their body judgement-free. A short version of this exercise involves quickly scanning over their body by slowly moving their attention from the top of the head to the feet, noticing and mentally naming areas of tension. This shorter version comes in useful for integrating body awareness in our day-to-day life, acting as a quick self-regulation and body reconnection tool.


 **Exercise: Regulating our nervous system through conscious breathing** (See Annex 10). Participants are guided to use their breath as a tool for emotional and physiological self-regulation in order to balance their nervous system, reduce stress and commotion. By focusing on the rhythm and the various steps involved in breathing, this exercise fosters better focus, induces calm and reconnects our mind and body in stressful situations. *Box breathing* refers to a cycle of breaths structured in four equal steps: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds, and pause for 4 seconds. By repeating this cycle 4-6 times, your breath slows down and the nervous systems gets a signal of safety. This exercise can easily be used before a stressful task, when feeling anxious or overwhelmed, thus working as a simple, yet efficient emotional regulation and mental clarity tool.

 **Exercise: Mental clarity by 'downloading' tasks** (See Annex 11). Participants are guided to use writing as a tool for cognitive organization and reducing mental overload. This exercise aims to externalize thoughts about tasks and duties, thus reducing the brain's constant effort to keep these active. This process supports mental clarity, the capacity to focus and to be present in the activity you are working


on. The clarity agenda is an exercise in which you put down all your current tasks in a dedicated space, whether an agenda, a sheet of paper or note-taking app, in no particular order, using no prioritization or filter. Participants are encouraged to include both major and minor tasks that tend to clutter their mind (*make a phone call, send an email, etc.*). The list gets updated whenever you get thoughts like 'don't forget this or that', especially if you are trying to direct your attention to other activities. This mental 'download' process frees your mind from the pressure of remembering information, allowing you to focus on the present and increasing your cognitive efficiency.

 **Exercițiul: Creșterea autoreglării emoționale prin identificarea factorilor declanșatori:** Participanții sunt ghidați să își observe reacțiile emoționale intense și să exploreze factorii care le declanșează, cu scopul de a înțelege mecanismele automate de răspuns. Exercițiul susține dezvoltarea conștientizării de sine și a capacității de autoreglare emoțională, facilitând trecerea de la reacții impulsive la răspunsuri mai conștiente și adaptative. Identificarea factorilor declanșatori este un exercițiu ce presupune observarea situațiilor în care apar reacții emoționale intense, precum iritarea, anxietatea sau impulsivitatea. Participanții notează contextul concret al situației, persoanele implicate, gândurile automate apărute și senzațiile corporale asociate. Ulterior, informațiile sunt analizate pentru a identifica tipare recurente legate de anumite contexte, relații sau circumstanțe. Prin clarificarea acestor factori declanșatori, participanții dobândesc un prim pas esențial în procesul de autoreglare, învățând să răspundă mai conștient și mai flexibil în situații similare viitoare.

 **Exercise: Better emotional self-regulation by identifying triggers.** Participants are guided to notice their intense emotional reactions and explore triggers in order to understand automatic response mechanisms. This exercise develops self-awareness and the capacity to emotionally self-regulate, allowing people to transition from impulsive reactions to more conscious and adaptative responses. Identifying triggers involves observing the situations that trigger intense emotional reactions, such as feeling irritated, anxious or acting impulsively. Participants make notes of the concrete context of that situation, who was involved, what went through their mind in the moment and related body sensations. Later on, they analyse this data to identify recurrent patterns around certain contexts, relationships or circumstances. By gaining clarity over the triggering factors, participants make a first crucial step into self-regulation, thus learning to be more aware and more flexible in their future reactions.

 **Exercise: Connecting to personal resources and increasing emotional energy.** Participants are asked to think of activities, experiences and habits that fill them with energy and make them feel good. This exercise helps people become aware of their personal resources and focus on behaviours that foster emotional

balance and motivation and that prevent exhaustion. By shifting focus from energy-consuming to regenerative factors, participants reinforce their self-care and self-regulation capacity.

 **Exercise: List of energising factors** (See Annex 12). Participants are asked to make an off-the-top-of-their-head list of all the activities, situations, people, places or habits that contribute to their energy level and their general wellbeing. They jot down things that make them feel more alive, relaxed, motivated or bring them better mental clarity, whether these are big or major experiences. Optionally, guide them to identify these resources, such as activities they enjoy even when they are tired or recent activities that brought them joy in their mind and body. Later on, participants are encouraged to select 2-3 elements in the list that can easily be integrated into their daily or weekly schedule; whenever their energy levels go down, they can return to this list. This activity helps people make more conscious, supportive choices, thus contributing to long-term balance and wellbeing.

2.4. Alternative Spaces and Face-to-Face Meetings: the Key to an Efficient Community of Practice

In-person meetings went better than online meetings, as they allowed for direct interactions, in-depth discussions and a personal connection between members, which is crucial in a community based on exchange of experience and collaborative learning. Being physically present fostered the building of trust, noticing non-verbal reactions and the creation of a safe space in which members felt comfortable sharing real challenges in their day-to-day activity.

Moreover, meetings taking place in various spaces of the community and outside an institutional setting added value by allowing members to leave their daily routine behind and focus on talks, reflection and exchanging ideas. Alternative spaces stimulated creativity, brought down hierarchical barriers and highlighted local resources, thus contributing to an inclusive, collaborative environment centred on the real needs of both professionals and beneficiaries.

2.5. Positive Results and Testimonies from the Community of Practice

The fact that our Community of Practice was adapted to the concrete needs of practitioners in Sibiu brought positive results, mainly because activities were built around their real experiences and daily challenges. Participants thought that the topics and formats of the CoP meetings were relevant, useful and directly applicable to their work with vulnerable children and youth.

Creating a safe, trusting space was a key element which allowed people to openly talk about professional and emotional difficulties, with no fear of being judged. This setting fostered good practice exchanges, mutual support and reinforced professional relationships.

This flexible format and the interdisciplinary approach enabled the participation and collaboration of professionals of the Sibiu General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection, thus contributing to their better understanding of roles and identification of common solutions. Besides, the needs identified during CoP meetings led to topics and concrete actions for subsequent meetings and even projects, further consolidating the usefulness and continuity of the community.

The CoP significantly benefitted from the fact that workshops took place in different locations, as this allowed for both continuity and familiarity with a stable space and the opportunity to explore and use local resources, stimulating creativity, a diversity of experiences, and member engagement.

Overall, the CoP became a relevant space for learning, reflection, and professional support, having a positive impact on practitioners and on interventions for vulnerable youth.

Testimonies: What did participants think about the Sibiu CoP meetings?

- *'I make time and even adjust my schedule to fit these meetings. It's a challenge, but I feel they bring a lot of value and wellbeing.'*
- *'Unfortunately, we only get to meet here; this is the space in which we can have open conversations, share experiences and express our needs.'*
- *'Being here is a safe haven, it's hard to leave and we look forward to the next meetings.'*
- *'These meetings allow me to get in touch with my feelings and give meaning to the daily stress at work. Simply being able to talk to someone is freeing.'*
- *'We get together, exchange stories, ideas and thoughts, and I feel I can breathe easy - it's a small getaway from daily activities and the stress at work.'*
- *'Thanks to members' diverse experiences, this space brings new perspectives and concrete ideas on how to adapt my methods in my work with young people.'*
- *'In the CoP, I can speak freely, share frustrations without the fear of being judged. It's all easier because people are there to listen and understand. This is a space of relief and reflection on professional challenges.'*
- *'I like that new needs arise from each meeting with an expert on a topic we suggested, and that we highlight solutions that can be turned into concrete actions.'*
- *'CoP meetings show me that I am not alone in the face of challenges and there are ways to tackle these together.'*
- *'My participation in the CoP is reminding me of why I chose this job and inspires me to keep looking for creative, practical solutions.'*

2.6. Challenges and Obstacles in Developing a Community of Practice

Supporting learning between different practitioners requires courage and a disposition for complexity. Giving people a space to come together to share experiences, develop their knowledge and skills implies renouncing strict control and accepting that results may be uncertain. However, results may also prove remarkable: motivated staff, engaged in both learning and the relationship with others, all contributing to innovation and to improved practice. Communities and practice cannot be imposed, but they can be supported and participation can be encouraged. By creating an enabling environment, managers can turn complexity into an opportunity and thus foster an organizational culture in which learning becomes a source of energy, inspiration, and progress.

One of the main barriers identified by the members of our Community of Practice was the lack of financial resources to purchase specialized materials or to conduct practical activities with beneficiaries. To support them, A.L.E.G. made its library available to the CoP, allowing members to borrow specialized books.

A key lesson learnt is that it is not enough to just put together, define the concept of, and decide on some rules and topics for a CoP. Although it would be ideal for things to move forward on their own, reality proves that this rarely happens. It is essential that participants are invited and supported to engage and to clearly understand the benefits for both their personal development and the practical application of actions in their work with youth. CoP members need to be motivated to share their ideas, the challenges they face and potential solutions rather than be handed everything on a silver platter. Through constant engagement and support, especially in the initial stages, the CoP may gradually turn into a reference for trust, a space to which people choose to return and contribute.

A major challenge is determining members to participate constantly. People's daily lives and professional responsibilities may affect their level of engagement, so continuous support and encouragement are key, as is highlighting the concrete benefits of their participation, in order for the Community to stay active and relevant. To strengthen engagement, the management of the Sibiu General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection also encouraged participation and created an enabling environment for collaboration, so that CoP members feel supported and motivated to contribute constantly, by sharing their experience and solutions to everyone's benefit.

At the same time, by analysing feedback and comments made during the interactive workshops, we identified new challenges and ideas that led to the development of the next stages of the CoP, as shown below.

- **Constant meetings and talks** – Participants expressed their need for regular sessions to keep learning and continue exchanging experiences.
- **Professional intervention and supervision** – We saw a need for settings to reflect on concrete cases, discuss challenges and get feedback from colleagues and mentors.
- **Resources adapted to the local context** – In order to efficiently apply strategies, Participants need materials and tools that consider their community or institution's specificities.
- **Custom intervention strategies** – Participants face a diverse range of situations which require flexible approaches adapted to the needs of individual beneficiaries or of the teams they work with.
- **Support for emotional and professional balance** – Promoting wellbeing and preventing burnout requires resources and continuous support mechanisms, including through guided discussions, coaching or mindfulness and self-reflection activities.

All these factors outline possibilities for the future development of the CoP, offering opportunities for in-depth collaboration, strengthening competences and creating a sustainable supportive learning environment.

OTHER WAYS TO MAKE USE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide may be used as a starting point for reflection and strategic action in your institution.

- **Kick off conversations with decision-makers.**
 - Use this guide to start conversations with your managers, team leaders or relevant departments about the benefits and opportunities of a Community of Practice (CoP).
 - Work together to explore your teams' interest go get involved and identify priorities for a collaborative community.

- **Turn ideas into concrete actions.**

- Discuss and adapt the concepts in this guide with your colleagues or leaders to identify practical support and implementation measures: organizing meetings, setting up joint platforms, defining member roles, planning a schedule of activities.
- Use this process to create a continuous learning framework to be supported and adopted by your entire organization.

- **Connect with and learn from others.**

- Share your experience and discover other CoP good practices,
- Feel free to write to us at contact@aleg-romania.eu or to join our Instagram and Facebook conversations using the hashtag #CdP.
- Exchanging ideas, resources and experiences contributes to members' professional development and to making a real impact in your community.

- **Plan for the medium/long-term.**

Use this guide to support your community's development in time, not only to kick it off.

- Together with your team, reflect on what you want your community to look like in 1-3 years: how many active members will it have, what type of activities will it be organizing, what results will it produce?
- Talk about the changes and challenges in your field that may affect the activity of your CoP.
- Decide on some clear objectives for the upcoming period.
- Identify concrete, realistic steps you can already start taking.
- Adjust course periodically and adapt your activities according to new needs.

- **Share and multiply value.**

- Share the ideas, resources and experiences developed in your organization or alongside other communities.
- Create a network effect whereby each member may contribute to developing a collaborative and continuous learning culture.

RESOURCES AND ANNEXES

4.1 Community of Practice Models:

A.L.E.G.- Ghid pentru dezvoltarea comunităților #ȘiEuReușesc - <https://aleg-romania.eu/ghid-pentru-dezvoltarea-comunitatilor-sieureușesc/>

Contraception and Sexual Education Society (SECS) - Community of practice - <https://secs.ro/comunitatea-de-practica/>

UK Government Guide, Community Development Handbook - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-development-handbook/community-development-handbook>

Practice Supervisor Development Programme: Dr Adi. Staempfli - Developing a community of practice in your organisation - https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/152mrkwm/sts_pt_developing_a_community_of_practice_in_your_org_final.pdf

Praxisframework.org - Communities of Practice: https://www.praxisframework.org/en/resource-pages/dibartolomeo-communities-of-practice?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Wenger-Trayner, E.- Communities of practice within and across organisations, Guide - https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Communities%20of%20practice%20within%20and%20across%20organisations_%20A%20guidebook.pdf

Wenger-Trayner, E.- Communities of practice and social learning systems - <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2000-EWT-Article-for-Organization-CoPs-and-social-learning-systems.pdf>

Wenger-Trayner, E. and Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015): Introduction to communities of practice. A brief overview of the concept and its uses - <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

4.2 Annexes

Annex 1

CoP Registration Template (Google Form data collection template)

Join our Community of Practice, a space of monthly interactive meetings with relevant guests working in human trafficking prevention, aimed at facilitating the exchange of good practices and experiences. (*You may change the topic with your own.*)

To set up this community together, please register by filling in the below form by 26 August 2025.

This activity is part of the project '*The Missing Link: Effective Stakeholder Cooperation for the Prevention of Human Trafficking among Vulnerable Youth*' organized by A.L.E.G. in collaboration with the Sibiu Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection and contributes to reducing individual and community-level vulnerabilities to human trafficking.

- *First and last name:*
- *E-mail:*
- *Telephone no.:*
- *Institution:*
- *Position/Profession:*
- *Preferred time slot for the CoP meeting:*
- *Please tell me more about (mention your needs about the topic, e.g. human trafficking):*
- *I would like you to invite an expert who may offer clarifications I can use in my work with young people. (If you don't have a specific name in mind, please mention a field, e.g. psychologist, gynaecologist, anti-traffic police, police, etc.).*
- *I would like to tell the organizers that...*
- *My needs from the community are...*
- *By filling in this form, I agree to taking part in the meetings of the Community of Practice.*

Annex 2

CoP Participation and Non-Disclosure Agreement No./.....

Art. 1. Parties to the agreement:

Institution/Organization _____, registered with _____ under no. _____, sole registration number _____, telephone no.: _____, e-mail. _____ represented by _____, as organizer of the Community of Practice, and

Mr./Mrs. _____
_____, domiciled in _____, telephone no. _____, e-mail _____
_____, working at _____
_____, position _____ as member of the Community of Practice (CoP) in _____

Art. 2. The object of this Agreement is to voluntarily join the Community of Practice (CoP) of _____, adhering to its principles, values, and rules, as well as committing to observing the confidentiality of the information shared during CoP activities. The Community is addressed to professionals in the field of social protection and assistance who work directly with vulnerable minors in the county of _____, with a view to preventing and combatting trafficking and exploitation.

Art. 3. Agreement Duration

This agreement goes into effect on the date when both parties have signed it and shall be valid until _____ or until the member has voluntarily withdrawn or was excluded, as per the provisions herein. Confidentiality obligations remain in effect for 5 years after the end of the participant's membership, except for legally regulated cases.

Art. 4. Parties' Rights and Obligations

The member:

- actively contributes to cop activities/meetings;
- contributes to good practice exchanges;
- observes cop rules, code of conduct, and the policy on safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults;
- treats sensitive information as confidential;
- has equal access to resources (documents, meetings, workgroups, etc.);
- benefits from methodological and logistic support from the facilitator/coordinator
- may withdraw from the CoP at any time, through a 15-day written prior notification.

The Institution/Organization:

- ensures a safe space for collaboration;
- facilitates communication and necessary resources;
- protects members' personal and professional data;
- responds to members' requests and complaints in due time.

Art. 5. Confidentiality

5.1. All the information shared by members during Cop meetings about their personal and professional lives, including details about their feelings, beliefs, thoughts, behaviours, as well as information about other people they might have personal/professional relationships with, shall be considered as confidential.

5.2. All the information communicated between CoP members and the CoP coordinator/facilitator clearly identified as private shall be treated as confidential.

5.3. Any other information members might have access to in the context of their participation to CoP meetings shall be considered as confidential, and disclosing it to third parties might have a negative effect on other CoP members or on the staff involved in the A.L.E.G. project.

5.4. Disclosing confidential data and information is possible should a member of the Community of Practice state, expressly and in writing, that they agree with the disclosing of that data and information (as part of activities in the interest of the beneficiaries, education and training activities, etc.).

Art. 6. Annexes

6.1 Code of conduct

6.2 Policy on safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults

6.3 Personal data processing agreement

Art. 7. Force majeure

Noncompliance with the provisions of this agreement shall be a ground for exclusion from the Community of Practice.

This Agreement was drawn up in two copies, one for each party, and shall go into effect on the date when it is signed.

Representative

CoP Member

Annex 3

Pre-workshop Question Collection Form

What would you like to know? Contribute to the CoP interactive workshop.

By participating to the Community of Practice, you have an opportunity to talk to psycho-social, educational and medical experts involved in working with vulnerable groups, people who may offer views and explanations relevant to the topics you are interested in.

We want this workshop to be as fit to your needs as possible, so please use this form to send us your questions or suggest topics you would like us to discuss with the guest. Your questions will directly contribute to how we design the content of the workshop.

What topics would you like to explore during the meeting?

- **Please tell me more about** (*Mention your needs about the topic, e.g. human trafficking, target group vulnerability.*):
- **My question is** (*Send us your question or topic you would like us to discuss during the workshop.*):

Annex 4

CoP meeting minutes (template)

Workshop:

Date:

Time:

Place:

Meeting Moderator/Facilitator/Coordinator:

Guest expert:

Participants:

Meeting objectives:

Meeting agenda:

Summary of talks:

Decisions:

Next steps:

Resources or materials:

Other comments:

Annexes (optional)

Annex 5

Feedback form (Google Form template)

Thank you for taking part in the CoP meeting!
Hopefully, the talks with our guests have been useful and inspiring for you professional work.

To ensure that future workshops are as suited to your needs and interests as possible, please send us your feedback.

- *I participated in the workshop on....., about.....*
- *On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all relevant and 5 very relevant, how relevant did you find the information discussed during the workshop to your daily work?*
- *What information or ideas discussed in the workshop did you find most valuable for your daily work?*
- *How did the workshop inspire you to improve your daily work and which ideas will you apply? Concrete example:*
- *How can we improve the format or the content of future workshops?*
- *Overall, how would you evaluate the organization of the workshop, including the location, trainer, theme, structure? Please score these on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not at all relevant and 5 is very relevant.*
- *Anything else you would like to tell us?*

Annex 6

Exercise: Value of Money in Time

Learning objectives

- Becoming aware of the fact that money is time, energy and personal effort.
- Understanding the difference between needs (essential) and wants (optional).
- Developing a more responsible view on daily expenses.
- Better capacity to make more conscious, responsible financial decisions.
- Seeing the long-term impact of small, repetitive expenses.

Materials

- Worksheet 'Value of Money in time'
- Pen/pencil
- (Optional) Telephone or calculator for simple math
- A space fit for individual work and perhaps talks in small groups

Description

During this exercises, we will look at money not as mere amounts, but as time. Each penny you spend equals minutes or hours of work. The objective is to better understand our expenses, not judge them.

There are no good or bad expenses, only more conscious choices.

Step 1: List of needs (essentials)

Participants are invited to put down things that are essential to them (e.g. food, rent, utilities, transport), how much they cost, how much they earn per hour and the number of hours they need to work to cover these expenses.

Clarifications:

- Income per hour may be estimated or real.
- No need for perfect calculations. The aim is to get a general picture.

Step 2: List of wants (optionals)

Participants jot down optional expenses or things they enjoy doing (e.g. going out for coffee, shopping, subscriptions) and convert how much these cost into work time.

Clarifications:

Often times, small expenses seem to cost insignificant amounts of money, but converting them into time may prove surprising.

Step 3: Personal conclusion

Participants are invited to write down the answers to the questions below.

- What surprised me most when I converted money into time?
- Based on working hours not money, what would I change in my spending habits?

This step helps frame the exercise and be more aware of our own spending patterns.

Step 4: Sharing and exchanging views (optional)

In pairs or small groups, participants may share the aspects they found most surprising and the small changes they would implement in the future.

Estimated results

- Developing a better understanding of the real value of money
- More responsible financial decisions
- Clarity in expense prioritization
- Developing a more conscious, healthy relationship with money

WORKSHEET - Value of Money in Time 'How much... time does my life cost'

1. List of needs (essentials)

Put down your needs, how much they cost and how many hours you need to work to cover these.

NEED	COST	INCOME/HOUR	INCOME/HOUR NECESSARY NO. OF HOURS

2. List of wants (optionals)

Write down the things you enjoy doing and convert their price in time.

WANT	COST	INCOME/HOUR	INCOME/HOUR NECESSARY NO. OF HOURS

3. Personal conclusion

- What surprised me most when I converted money into time?
- Based on working hours not money, what would I change in my spending habits?

Annex 7

Exercise: Beliefs around Money

Learning objectives

- Become aware of how your beliefs around money were shaped in your childhood.
- Identify limitative beliefs and their impact on financial behaviours.
- Practice turning your limitative beliefs into productive ones.

Materials

- Worksheet (paper or digital)
- Pen/pencil

Description

Step 1: Look back to your childhood - beliefs and behaviours you witnessed and/or heard

Write down your answers to the questions below. Put down everything as it comes to mind, don't analyse or correct anything.

- What did your mother think about money?
- What did your father think about money?
- What did your relatives think about money?
- As a child, what behaviours around money did you see?
- What do your friends think about money?

Step 2: Self-evaluation - limitative beliefs

On a scale from **1 to 10**, assess the statements below to identify those beliefs you still have.

Score the statements below between **1 and 10**, where **1 = I do not believe that**, **10 = I strongly believe that**

- Whatever I do, I never have enough money.
- You can't make a lot of money when you're young.
- Money is hard to earn and quick to evaporate.
- Money is hard to multiply.
- Money doesn't bring happiness.
- Better to be poor and honest.
- Rich people are stingy and greedy.
- Money change people for the worse.
- You can only make a fortune if you work hard.
- No good comes to poor people.
- The rich don't even see you if you're poor.

- Money does not fall out of the sky, nor does it grow on trees.
- You can only make money by lying.
- The only way to have money is to not spend it.
- You need big bucks to do big business.
- I don't have the mind to make money.
- I was born in the wrong country.
- Money only goes to the smart.
- To me, money is not important.
- Money has no value.
- I don't know how to make money. No one in my family made money.
- Only the lucky make money.
- Better to be poor and healthy.
- Money slips through my fingers.

Step 3: Changing your beliefs

Select three limitative beliefs your scored over 5 (or with maximum scores) and rephrase them in a productive manner.

Limitative belie → Productive belief

Step 4: Sharing your beliefs and exchanging views

In pairs or small groups, participants are asked to share the three limitative beliefs (their impact on their lives and financial decisions) and the corresponding productive beliefs. Emphasize listening, openness and exchanges of ideas, not correction and judgements.

At this step, participants have the opportunity to realise they have many beliefs in common and take inspiration in other people's views and rephrased beliefs. This exercises contributes to normalizing personal experiences and consolidating participant's feeling of safety and belonging.

Estimated results

Being better connected to their own life experience
 More clarity on where their beliefs around money originate
 Reducing self-judgement and the feeling of isolation
 Increased capacity to consciously work on their own beliefs
 Learning by exchanging experience

Annex 8

Exercise: Resetting Your Relationship with Money. Setting Personal Financial Standards

Learning objectives

- Clarifying how participants define the relationship they want to have with money
- Moving from vague objectives ('I want more money') to clear financial standards
- Identifying small, realistic, concrete steps to support change
- Becoming aware of the barriers and patterns that may sabotage your relationship with money
- Getting a stronger feeling of control and financial responsibility

Materials

- Worksheet (paper or digital)
- Pen/pencil
- (Optional) Flipchart for examples

Description

Introduction

This exercise is not about financial objectives or the ideal amount of money. We look at **standards**, i.e. what you want your daily relationship with money to look like day. Standards are about **behaviours**, not perfection.

This exercise is about being realistic, not about pressure or comparison.

Step 1: Setting personal financial standards

Participants are invited to imagine their future self in relation with money and to write down their answers to questions such as:

- How do I relate to money?
- What are my financial behaviours?
- How do I make decisions about expenses and savings?

Emphasize **who you are becoming**, not your earnings.

Step 2: Small, concrete steps

'Big changes stem from small, repetitive habits.'

Participants choose 2-3 simple actions they can perform daily or weekly and that can bring them closer to their standards (e.g. keep a record of expenses, stop before making an impulsive purchase, save a small amount), actions meant to **bring them closer to their future self**.

Step 3: Consider failure

Participants reflect on real barriers. The aim is not guilt, but **anticipation**.

- What makes me spend money impulsively?
- When do I lose control?
- What habits or feelings sabotage me?

Step 4: Framing and sharing

- In pairs, participants may discuss the prompts below.
- What financial standards do I want to set?
- A concrete step I can start applying tomorrow is...

Sharing is optional, though **recommended**.

Estimated results

- Clarity over their relationship with money
- A stronger feeling of control and financial responsibility
- Fewer impulsive financial behaviours
- A more mature, realistic view on money
- Foundation for sustainable long-term changes

WORKSHEET - Resetting your relationship with money

Setting personal financial standards

Instructions

Fill in this worksheet honestly. There are no wrong or right answers.

Step 1: My future self's relationship with money

Put down your answers to the questions below.

- What will my future self's relationship with money be?
•
•
•
- What financial behaviours will they have?
•
•
•
- How will they make decisions about expenses and savings?
•
•
•

Step 2: Small, concrete steps

Put down 2-3 actions you can consistently implement to meet your financial standards.

-
-
-

Step 3: Consider failure

Answer the questions below honestly.

- What makes me lose control over money most often?
•
•
•
- In what situations do I spend money impulsively or not care about money?
•
•

-
- What could I do differently next time?
-
-
-

Step 4: Final reflection

- What will I take home from this exercise?
-
-
-

Annex 9

Exercise: Drawing Your Body Body Tension Awareness

This exercise helps participants connect to their body and raises their awareness of where tension accumulates.

Description

- Draw a human body outline on a sheet of paper (or use a template).
- Take notice of the areas in your body where you feel tension, discomfort or rigidity.
- Colour these areas as follows:
 - **green** – relaxed, tension-free areas;
 - **yellow/orange** – mild tension;
 - **red** – most tension.
- Do not judge the results, just notice and colour the body outline.

Quick version (no drawing): body scan

- Close your eyes and slowly move your attention from the top of your head to your feet.
- Notice areas of tension, pressure, or discomfort.
- Make mental notes of these ('tension in the shoulders, tense jaw').

This is a quick version of the exercise that you can use for immediate regulation in your daily activity.

Annex 10

Exercise: Box breathing

This breathing exercise helps calm your nervous system, reduce stress and increase focus.

Description:

- Breathe in through your nose for **4 seconds**.
- Hold for **4 seconds**.
- Slowly breathe out through your mouth for **4 seconds**.
- Pause for **4 seconds**.

Repeat this cycle **4-6 times** at a comfortable pace. This exercise comes in handy before a demanding task, when you feel anxious or overwhelmed.

Annex 11

Exercise: 'Download' Tasks from Your Mind (Clarity Agenda)

This practice supports mental clarity and lowers cognitive overload.

Description:

- Grab an agenda, a sheet of paper or a notetaking app.
- Jot down **all the tasks** you have to do, using no prioritization or filter.
- Include small items, too ('call a friend, send an e-mail'), not just the most important ones.
- Come back to the list whenever your mind goes 'don't forget this or that', especially when you are focusing on another task.

You are thus mentally downloading information so your brain no longer has to actively remember it, **freeing up mental space** and increasing your capacity to focus on your current task.

• Trigger identification

This exercise helps understand automatic reactions and increases emotional self-regulation.

Description

Notice the moments when you have intense reactions (irritation, anxiety, impulsiveness). Write down:

- What happened?
- Who were you with?
- What went through your mind?
- How your body reacted?
- **Identify patterns: situations, people or recurrent contexts.**
- By finding these triggers, you will make a first step to a conscious rather than a reactive response.

Annex 12

Exercise: List of Energising Factors

This exercise improves your awareness about energizing activities, situations and habits that make you feel good and emotionally supported. Identifying these is an important step for you balance, motivation and preventing fatigue.

Description:

- On a sheet of paper, agenda or in your notetaking app, write down: things that make me feel energized.
- Make notes freely, with no prior analysis or filter, of all the things that:
 - *make you feel alive;*
 - *make you feel good;*
 - *increase motivation or clarity;*
 - *make you feel relaxed or joyful.*

These may be both big and small things: activities, people, moments in time, places, habits, moods (e.g. a good cup of coffee, a nice smell, etc.).

Questions (optional):

- *What do I enjoy doing even when I'm tired?*
- *What activities make me feel more energized?*
- *What moments have made my mind and body feel good lately?*

Once you have the list

- select 2-3 things you can easily integrate in your daily or weekly routine;
- come back to this list whenever you feel your energy levels drop.

This exercise shifts focus from things that 'consume' you to things that 'nourish' you, thus helping you make more conscious choices for your wellbeing.

Annex 13

Metaphorical Story 'Lucia and the Secret of the Lamp'

Lucia was an especially warm woman, a living lamp among worried people. She never hesitated when she saw somebody having a bad day: she shared her warmth or lit up their path. 'Have a spark', she used to say, 'until you find a matchbox in your own pocket'. In time, this simple habit started dimming down her inner light, as Lucia forgot a crucial detail: flames need fuel.

One night, she felt more tired than usual. Lucia looked herself in the mirror and noticed she barely had any oil left and her usual flame had been reduced to a feeble flicker. She felt empty inside, as if she had given away not only her warmth, but also the walls of her home. Sensing that she would go all out at the first breath, she put her coat on and started walking in the morning dew, looking for the answer her heart was unable to get on its own.

At the edge of the forest, she saw the Wise Woman chopping wood. Seeing Lucia, she stopped and invited her to get a bite and a drink some fresh spring water. 'I feel like a drained well', Lucia whispered. 'I wanted to save the world from the dark, but not the dark lives in me.'

'You thought you were the sun, Lucia', the kind-eyed Wise Woman answered. 'You mistook generosity and dedication for self-sacrifice. Your inner lamp needs oil, which is your time, your peace, your breath. Giving away your light is a gift. Giving away your oil is losing yourself.'

On her way home, Lucia walked slowly, as dust settled on her clothes. She no longer thought about what others said, but only about her heavy arms and empty chest. Pulling her coat closer to her body, it was the first time in a long time that she no longer looked ahead to find people who needed her, but simply watched her step. She felt her inner light extremely fragile, like a broken nest, and knew that any wrong move could put out her last trace of heat. Burdened with this new worry, Lucia walked on the street where life awaited as usual.

On her journey back home, she met an old friend who always carried his discontent as heavy clothes.

'Lucia!', he shouted gladly. *'So good to see you! I feel like I'm crashing down, I need your light, I need to talk to you the whole night, I need your help carrying my burden.'*

Lucia felt guilty. However, remembering her dim wick, she took a deep breath and took her hand to her chest.

'I hear your trouble', Lucia said in a calm voice. 'But today, my own light is too dim to guide us both. Giving you my last spark now will leave us both in the dark. Today, I need to be alone. See you in three days, when I will have replenished my light.'

Lucia sat under an old walnut tree and stopped trying to do anything. She sat there for hours and allowed her thoughts to settle like dust after a storm.

Slowly, her body replenished the vital resource of careful self-awareness. This was the oil in her inner lamp. Her flame started flickering timidly, then grew big, well-defined, stable, projecting security.

Lucia then understood the paradox: to be truly there for others, she first had to learn to show up for herself. That day, Lucia learnt how to listen to her inner flame before opening the door. She never stopped helping others, but had understood that she could only do so when she had enough fuel to share comfortably. In time, people understood that her light was not on tap, but rather a precious gift flowing from a looked-after well. In the evening, Lucia went home early, put her hands around her lamp grateful for its nourishing peace. She knew that only somebody who was able to sit with him/herself in the dark was able to truly light up someone else's darkness.

(Story gathered by psychologist Catrinel Dragomir)

Annex 14

Exercise: Exploring the Consequences of a Development Direction

Objective: This exercise helps the team better understand the long-term implications of a development decision or direction and identify both positive effects and potential risks.

- Recommended time: 45-60 minutes
- Working in small groups (3-5 people)
- Materials: Flipchart paper, post-its, highlighters

Step 1

Formulate a statement about the future of the CoP (e.g. 'In 3 years, the CoP will include 50 members who will meet once a month' or 'The CoP will be a relevant local collaboration mechanism').

Write this statement in the middle of your flipchart.

Step 2

Identify the direct consequences of your statement. These are level-1 consequences.

Ask yourselves:

- *What changes immediately?*
- *How is our activity different?*
- *What new responsibilities do we have?*

Write each consequence on a post-it.

Step 3

For each level-1 consequence, think of other effects that may arise later on. These are level-2 consequences.

Keep on exploring other levels if necessary.

Ask yourselves:

- What other changes may arise?
- What opportunities appear?
- What risks or difficulties may we face?

Step 4

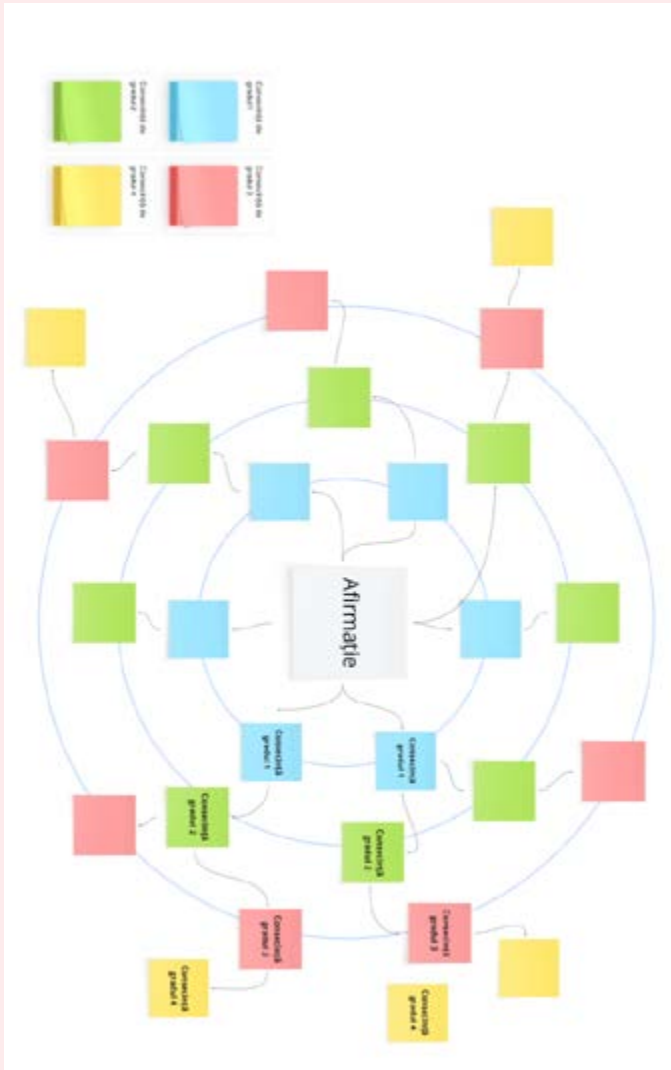
Use arrows to highlight connections between consequences. Notice:

- Where do you see positive effects?
- Where may risks arise?
- Where do you need additional prep work?

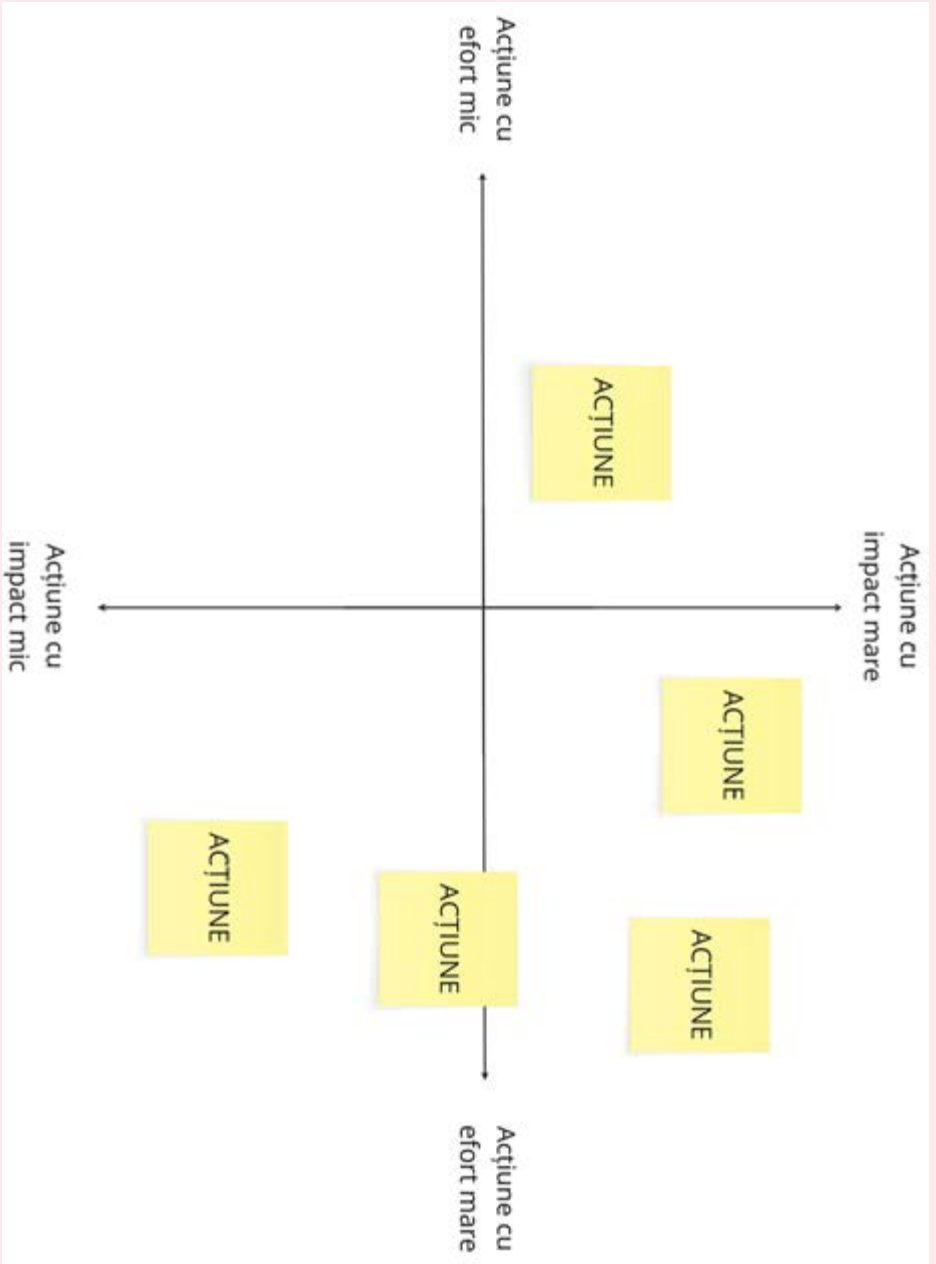
Step 5

Plenary discussion (15-20 minutes):

- What was most surprising?
- What risks do you need to manage?
- What concrete steps should you plan already?



'Exploring Consequences' model (© 2025 Institute for the Future)



'Exploring Consequences' model (© 2025 Institute for the Future)

Annex 15

Exercise: Setting Priority Actions

Objective: This exercise helps the team turn reflections on the CoP future into concrete, prioritized steps.

- Recommended time: 45-60 minutes
- Working in small groups or in plenary

Step 1

Starting from the conclusions of the previous exercise, answer the question below:

- What can we do now to support the future path of the CoP?

Think about actions to be initiated by:

- individual members;
- coordinators;
- the organizations involved;
- the CoP as a whole.

Write each idea on a post-it.

Step 2

Place the actions on a simple Effort-Impact matrix.

- The horizontal line refers to the amount of effort needed for each action (small-big).
- The vertical line is about the impact each action might have on the CoP development (low-high).

Discuss and decide together where each action belongs.

Step 3

Analyse the result and talk about:

- Which actions are high-impact and low-moderate-effort?
- Which actions can you start working on immediately?
- For which actions do you need additional collaboration?
- What barriers do you need to overcome to implement high-impact actions?

Step 4

Select 2-4 priority actions and decide on:

- people responsible for it;
- the first concrete step;
- a deadline for this step.

