

the climate we speak



Older People Engage in
Climate Communication.



Guidelines

Learning Communities of Practice



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Introduction The Project

“Climate We Speak” project focuses on promoting constructive and empathic communication about climate change and sustainability issues among older people and people active in the field of adult education. With our project, we – partner organisations in Poland, Portugal, Belgium and Austria – aim to help break the climate silence and support older people in exercising their right to participate in public discourse, including on climate and sustainability, and in shaping narratives that reflect their lived realities.

Why is climate communication with older people important?

As we know from studies, people tend to absorb and change things (more) when it comes from people around them. Researchers have found that the so-called social pro-climate feedback effect can occur. After a conversation with a person of trust, one tends to change initial beliefs and opinions more likely. Thus, it should never be underestimated how much people are influenced by what people around them think, say, and do. Everyday communications are part of social change. Furthermore, experts from Climate Outreach¹ emphasise that climate protection can only work if each social group develops its own version of climate protection.

(1) <https://climateoutreach.org>



Why do we address adult educators?

Adult educators very often act as “persons of trust” for older people they are working with. We strongly believe in the importance of strengthening their capacity to pro-actively tackle climate and sustainability issues in everyday conversations with older people. It is crucial that adult educators engage in mutual learning and dialogue with older people, acknowledging their knowledge, concerns and perspectives.

How are we going to strengthen adult educators in climate communication?

We are offering adult educators the opportunity to exchange experiences in climate communication with older people, to gain inspiration and to learn from each other. We are doing this by following the concept of communities of practice (CoP). In this format, adult educators are not only considered learners, but they are also encouraged to exchange ideas on climate communication with older people. They are invited to reflect on previous patterns of action and communication, jointly develop ideas for new approaches and share their experiences. Communities of practice are based on the idea that participants share common concerns and as experts of their living and working environment can share best practices and create new knowledge.

About the guidelines

Based on the concept of communities of practice, project partners in Poland, Portugal and Austria are implementing Learning Communities of Practice with adult educators. We developed these guidelines to prepare ourselves and to share our ideas with organisations and stakeholders that are interested in this issue. We consider them as a framework that contains basic information on the concept of communities of practice and provide suggestions for the organisation and design of this exchange forum.

However, it is important to recognise that (partner) organisations are very different (e.g. in terms of orientation, settings, target groups and possibilities). The guidelines are intended to encourage partners and organisations interested in implementing the exchange format to find their own way. These guidelines are a living tool, designed as a starting point. Implementing Learning Communities of Practice with adult educators and Climate Hubs with older people will undoubtedly result in valuable experience being gathered. This will be incorporated into the project’s final products, including how-to guides for climate communication with older people and a collection of Climate Hubs methods and formats, set to be released in autumn 2027.

“Communities of Practice are made of people with a common interest, who collaborate to do it better.”²

A community of practice is a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic. They come together to fulfil both individual and group goals. Communities of practice often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice.

The characteristics of a community of practice are³:

- ⊕ **Domain:** Community members have a shared domain of interest, competence and commitment that distinguishes them from others. This shared domain creates common ground, inspires members to participate, guides their learning, and gives meaning to their actions.
- ⊕ **Community:** Members pursue this interest through joint activities, discussions, problem-solving opportunities, information sharing and relationship building. The notion of a community creates the social fabric for enabling collective learning. A strong community fosters interaction and encourages a willingness to share ideas.

- ⊕ **Practice:** Community members are actual practitioners in this domain of interest and build a shared repertoire of resources and ideas that they take back to their practice. While the domain provides the general area of interest for the community, the practice is the specific focus around which the community develops, shares and maintains its core of collective knowledge.

Based on these characteristics, communities of practice:

- ⊕ provide a forum for people interested in helping each other with everyday needs and questions;
- ⊕ develop and disseminate evidence-based information on the issue of interest, best practices, guidelines and strategies;
- ⊕ manage a body of knowledge from which participants can draw and
- ⊕ create breakthrough ideas, new knowledge, and new practices.

(2) <https://www.communityofpractice.ca>

(3) <https://www.communityofpractice.ca/background/what-is-a-community-of-practice/>

(Learning) Communities of Practice

The *Climate We Speak* project team decided to adopt the concept of communities of practice. This exchange format connects people, provides a shared context, enables dialogue, stimulates learning, captures and shares existing knowledge and encourages joint activities.

Learning Communities of Practice within the *The Climate We Speak* project provide a forum for adult educators and people working with older people to share information, stories and personal experiences on the issue of climate communication with older people. This builds understanding and insight. Participants are encouraged to discuss challenging problems, identify solutions to common problems and challenges, and develop new ideas and possibilities.

Our Learning Communities of Practice are specifically designed to address the target group of adult educators and other professionals and volunteers who work with older people. The domain of the Learning Communities of Practice is climate communication with older people. Participants explore ways to co-create meaningful climate dialogues with older people in an empathic and constructive way.

In the following chapters, we will look at how to realise the Learning Communities of Practice. We provide a clear overview of the framework of the format, describe an ideal-typical process and give recommendations for designing and planning a Learning Community of Practice. We will also share experiences with Learning Communities of Practice realised in partner countries.

Interested in learning more about the concept of communities of practice? Have a look [here](#)

3)

Realisation of Learning Communities of Practice

Key points

Number and setting(s) of meetings

The setting of the communities of practice can be different: meetings can take place online or in person, depending on the preferences and possibilities of partners and target groups.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLIMATE WE SPEAK

Austrian partners offer a Learning Community of Practice for adult educators from different regions as well as from Germany and Switzerland. An online event is the best solution.

Partners in Portugal are launching a Learning Community of Practice with professors and instructors active at the Oeiras Senior University. In this case the best way to share experiences and exchange in climate issues is to meet in person.

As part of the *The Climate We Speak* project, partners in Poland, Portugal and Austria are running 3-4 Learning Communities of Practice (lasting 1.5 to 3 hours). Our target is to reach 10-15 people at each meeting.

Target group

In general, the target group are adult educators, who work with older people and want to improve their communication skills. However, in each partner country, participants may differ – depending on the contexts, settings and groups of people who the respective partner organisation works with.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLIMATE WE SPEAK

Lab60+ in Poland collaborates with trainers from the Climate Fresk and various civil society organisations. They are trained to work on climate issues with different age groups. However, they are interested in improving their communication skills and adapting their concept to the target group of older people.

Partners from Oeiras Senior University in Portugal address professors and instructors offering courses for older students. This target group is very interested in and used to dealing with scientific-based information.

Realisation of Learning Communities of Practice

In Austria, queraum and Hallo Klima! are establishing Learning Communities of Practice with (older) activists (e.g. “Omas for Future” or “Grandparents for Future”), who are already involved in climate protection and communication with and for older people. They are interested in methods and tools that support them in starting conversations on climate issues.

In a university setting, however, it is also crucial to communicate scientific facts in a straightforward and engaging way, ensuring that as many people as possible have access to this information.

These and similar topics are to be addressed and discussed in the Learning Communities of Practice. The participants benefit from shared information and best practices and will explore ways in which climate issues can be addressed in their work with older people.

Composition of the group

Basically, communities of practice address adult educators with common interests and questions. However, the composition of the group can vary:

- ⊕ **Heterogeneous group:** Learning Communities of Practice can address practitioners and volunteers who work in different settings and with different groups of older people. Participants might benefit from different experiences and backgrounds represented in the group. Facilitators are also encouraged to ensure that the Learning Communities of Practice are inclusive of (older) people from diverse backgrounds and attentive to the intersecting challenges they may face in engaging with climate issues.

Purpose, goals and outcomes

For Learning Communities of Practice to be successful, it is important that they have a clear focus and are orientated towards the needs of the participants.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLIMATE WE SPEAK

Feedback from adult educators in our project has shown that they find it challenging to talk to and work with older people about climate issues. They are concerned with questions such as “How to start a conversation with others about climate issues?”, “How to talk constructively and empathically about climate issues with others?” and “How to react constructively to questions, doubts, critical statements and different perspectives?”

Realisation of Learning Communities of Practice

- ⊕ **Homogeneous group:** It is also possible to specifically address individual groups of adult educators, who share the same professional background or work setting. In this case, the content can be tailored specifically to this target group.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLIMATE WE SPEAK

In the *The Climate We Speak* project, partners are pursuing both approaches: some of the Learning Communities of Practice are aimed at a more homogeneous target group, such as professors and instructors at the Oerias Senior University. Also heterogeneous compositions are being tried out. For example, activists from different organisations or employees from different institutions are involved.

Regardless of the composition of the group, it is important that participants have an incentive to participate. The Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium points out that people need to feel that the time and effort they put into the meetings will give them something back and summarise the following ways to ensure value for time⁴:

- ⊕ choosing issues that are timely for all participants and based on their daily work
- ⊕ describing how their input will make a difference

- ⊕ detailing opportunities to connect with others across organisations and roles
- ⊕ offering resources
- ⊕ generating excitement about collaborating to find new solutions.

Organisation and contents

There are different approaches you can take in terms of organisation and content. A series of Learning Communities of Practice should build on each other thematically. The approach is clear: start with basic information, then focus on individual aspects (e.g. specific methods) in subsequent sessions. Alternatively, each Learning Communities of Practice event can be organised as a stand-alone event. In this case, each event is focused on a specific group of adult educators.

Role of the facilitators

Facilitators:

- ⊕ decide on the orientation, composition and implementation of the Learning Communities of Practice
- ⊕ invite the participants
- ⊕ organise the premises (online/in person)
- ⊕ provide an inviting setting for face-to-face meetings (e.g. drinks, snacks)

(4) <https://www.communityofpractice.ca/getting-started/recruit/>

- ⊕ prepare the content of the meetings (e.g. agenda)
- ⊕ give a thematical input or invite external experts to provide an impulse for discussion
- ⊕ moderate the meetings
- ⊕ prepare the documentation and share a summary with participants

Possible contents

During the research phase of the project, it became clear that, among others, the following topics appear relevant for adult educators in climate communication with older people:

- ⊕ Scientific facts and reliable resources
- ⊕ Basics of climate communication
 - target group of older people
 - principles of climate communication with older people
 - how to deal with disinformation and resistance
- ⊕ Interactive formats and methods to start a conversation on climate issues and keep discussions going

For the content design of Learning Communities of Practice on these topics, we would like to refer to the Starting Kit, which was also developed as part of the *The Climate*

We Speak project (see [Website](#)). However, the actual content and methods should be adapted to the specific target group and setting.

We will therefore be very general in the following chapters and introduce individual elements that Learning Communities of Practice can include. We have also compiled recommendations for the design and implementation of exchange and networking formats.

Elements of a Learning Community of Practice

This is what a Learning Community of Practice could look like. Here is a typical process: A Learning Community of Practice can last between 1.5-2 hours (online) and up to 3 hours (face-to-face) and consists of the following elements:

- ⊕ Check in & getting to know each other
- ⊕ Content input
- ⊕ Exchange of knowledge & experience
- ⊕ Summary & outlook
- ⊕ Check-out
- ⊕ Post-processing

Check in & getting to know each other

The check-in and familiarisation process will take longer if the group is meeting for the first time, or shorter if the members already know each other. During the introductory round, establish a link to the topic. Use the following exercises from the Starting Kit as ice-breaking activities here: Climate Animals, Climate Pictures, Planet B and Climate Activity (see Starting Kit, chapter 4).

Content Input

A content-related input is an effective way to stimulate mutual exchange. This is a short presentation (about 10-15 minutes) on a topic. It can also be a film clip, pictures, etc.

Exchange of experience and discussion

At the heart of a Learning Community of Practice is the exchange of experiences among the participants, and this must be given sufficient time. This will take place in one of two ways. Either it will be done in several small groups, or it will be done together in a large group.

Summary & outlook

At the end of the meeting, the moderator will summarise the content discussed, including providing an outlook for future meetings and activities.

Check out

What do the participants get out of the meeting? What else do they want to say? Feedback from participants is given verbally in a session called 'one word feedback' or online via a 'feedback waterfall'. In the latter, participants write short feedback in the chat.

Post-processing

It is helpful for the project team to reflect on their experiences with the Learning Communities of Practice and summarise them in writing. Please find a template for the reflection and documentation in the annex.

Some more ice-breaking activities for check-ins can be found [here](#)

General tips for online meetings are summarised [here](#)

Learning is about...:
Creating 'Aha-moments'
in exchange formats
and webinars

First, ask yourself:

- ⊕ **Which workshop leader / facilitator / speaker / trainer inspires me? And why?**
- ⊕ **What is my favourite way to learn?**
- ⊕ **How do I memorise things best?**

It is very likely that we will all have different answers to these questions. We can only create 'Aha-moments' or moments of insights if we take a few things into account in our planning of different formats, namely:

1. Learning is about knowledge, skills AND attitudes.

Maja Göpel, sustainability expert and transformation researcher, gets to the heart of the matter: "I want an educational revolution. The question is: what kind of education meets the challenges of the 21st century? It's not just about knowledge, but about competencies. [...] What matters is not only what knowledge we acquire, but also how we acquire it—and how we then use it to become creative ourselves."

In addition to knowledge, we recommend including the inner development goals (IDGs) in various formats for skills. The IDG framework assumes that an inner dimension is a basic prerequisite for breaking out of old patterns. If we want to change the outer world, we have to create the conditions for this in the inner world.

IDGs are therefore skills and attitudes that are required for truly sustainable action. The IDG framework categorises core competencies into 5 dimensions, namely being, thinking, relating, collaborating and acting which in turn are backed up by 23 skills.

Learning is about...:
Creating 'Aha-moments'
in exchange formats
and webinars



2. Consider different learning types and styles

To create 'Aha-moments' we must take into account that people learn differently. Different types of learning are visual, auditory, imitation, haptic, gustatory, olfactory, learning by teaching, hands-on, learning by experts or communicative in groups. It is important to consider different learning styles in one format and to implement them methodically.

For example, include, competences like critical thinking, perspective or communication skills as well as courage and creativity in your formats. Identify important skills in your learning programme and consider them on an equal footing with factual knowledge.

For example, combine a workshop with pictures (comics, landscapes, photographs...) or music to appeal to people who like to learn by seeing or hearing. Or bring something to smell or taste. Be creative in addressing different types of learners in your content.

Learning is about...: Creating 'Aha-moments' in exchange formats and webinars

3. Think about, goal, content, method and technical possibilities

First think about the goal, including the learning goal for the participants. Learning objective means – what is different with the participants afterwards? The second step is to adapt the content to your learning objectives. Third, come up with a method that matches with the learning objective, the target group and the content. Think about the different learning types and come up with a variety of different methods. Finally, check whether your plan is compatible with the technical possibilities on site. If you have prepared a PPT presentation, you will need a projector, laptop, possibly HDMI cable, etc. Or if you want to show a piece of music or a film excerpt, there must be appropriate speakers on site.

Why this order? The most important is to go with the goal first. A common mistake is that we're about to discover methods and techniques – but never use them simply because it's nice!

4. People like to learn with stories

People think in (classic) stories. Society is so steeped in stories that it is almost impossible to recognise where reality begins and the story ends. We are 12 times more likely to remember a fact if it is wrapped up in a story.⁵

Put yourself in your target group's shoes and ask for their stories on certain topics, e.g. how their environment, nature, the weather have changed in recent decades; what they have noticed and how they have been affected. This brings us to point 5.

5. Practical transfer is particularly relevant

Ask yourself: How can participants translate the knowledge of the formats into their daily practice? Are there everyday references? What knowledge is relevant for the participants? The participants themselves are experts on the realities of their lives. If you cannot establish a practical reference yourself, invite participants to identify how the shared knowledge resonates with their lived realities and priorities. What is relevant to them, to what extent and for what?

(5) Source: Heath, Chip and Dan, 2007: „Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die“

5)

Examples and experiences from *The Climate We Speak* partners

We are committed to inspiring and supporting interested readers in starting their own communities of practice. We are proud to share concrete examples of Learning Communities of Practice realised in partner countries. Partners have reflected on their experiences and are now ready to share tips and tricks.

Learning Community of Practice – Portugal

1. General information

Duration of session: 1 hour

Name of the LCoP/Topic: Climate communication with older people – constructive, relevant to everyday life and motivating
Location/Format: in-person, at USO premises

Participants/Roles: A total of 20 senior professors and senior students, all of whom were retired and represented fields such as economics, state consultancy, education, public administration, and municipal roles.

2. Objectives & structure

The aim of the LCoP was to engage participants in dialogue, provide foundational information on climate communication, and share practical experiences. We also sought to spark interest in further exchanges and joint activities. The idea was also to encourage senior professors to use the material in their own

teaching. At the start of the meeting, the project team and the administrative board of USO introduced themselves and outlined the purpose of the seminar. This was followed by feedback on effective ways to communicate about climate change. The project team also prepared documentation, which will be sent to the participants.

3. Outcomes

The LCoP provided valuable insights into effective climate communication and community engagement. Participants highlighted the importance of interactive, participatory formats that actively involve seniors and other stakeholders. The sessions revealed that small, focused groups foster deeper dialogue and knowledge sharing, while co-creation of activities strengthens participants' commitment. Feedback also emphasized the need for clear, accessible materials and regular updates to sustain engagement. Overall, the LCoPs demonstrated that collaborative, iterative approaches are essential for building climate awareness, bridging generational gaps, and refining dissemination strategies. In the LCoPs, the combination of sharing ideas and personal experiences proved highly effective. This collaborative exchange fostered mutual learning, strengthened community engagement, and enriched the discussion on climate issues.

4. Reflection & evaluation

Participant feedback, gathered via questionnaire, was highly positive. Many emphasized

the relevance of the topic, praised the insights shared, and valued the chance to network with professionals in the area. Some senior professors have expressed an interest in using the material in their classes to discuss climate issues with their students (e.g. in an English class).

“Looking forward to engaging in cross-border dialogue; climate is a borderless issue.”

“Motivated and refreshed by the lively exchange and inspiration.”

“Valued the focus beyond just facts, avoiding the typical ‘I do this, but you do that’ discussions.”

2. Objectives & structure

The LCoP aimed to foster dialogue among stakeholders working with and for older people by offering practical insights on preparing for climate talks and sharing experiences in an open, supportive atmosphere.

After introductions, participants used zoom polls to reflect on what they hope to achieve in climate discussions and what helps them feel confident. Marianne Dobner (Hallo Klima!) provided an inspiring input on “Facts, Aims and Attitude”, followed by interactive tools such as polls, small group exchanges and chat questions. All contributions were summarised and shared with participants after the session.

3. Outcomes

The mix of expert input and interactive methods created a lively and participatory atmosphere, that encouraged mutual learning and made participants feel heard.

4. Reflection & evaluation

Having a designated technical support person ensured smooth facilitation and allowed everyone to focus on the content. The interactive approach proved highly effective, encouraging open exchange and collaboration. Documentation and presentations were shared afterwards, and absent participants were kept informed to strengthen continuity.

Learning Community of Practice – Austria

1. General information

Duration of session: 2 hours

Location/Format: online via Zoom

Name of the LCoP/Topic: How can we feel more confident in climate discussions?

Participants/Roles: 26 stakeholders from Austria and Germany active in neighbourhood work and urban development, public administration, health and care, social institutions, research, and civil society.

Feedback was very positive – participants highlighted the warm moderation, the inspiring and low-threshold format, and the enriching small group discussions.

“The exchange in small groups was very enriching. I am already looking forward to the next webinar.”

“A very important and enjoyable workshop!”

“Many thanks for the charming moderation and the open and interactive format.”

“Many thanks for all the contributions, they touched me!”

Learning Community of Practice – Poland

1. General information

Duration of session: 2 hours

Name of the LCoP/Topic: Climate narratives

Location/Format: online via Zoom

Participants/Roles: A total of ten people participated: senior activists and representatives of the Senior Economy Bank and senior councils in Poland

2. Objectives & structure

The aim of LCoP was to establish a dialogue with leaders of senior councils in Poland, as well as with activists who create strategic activities for this target group. We discussed how to make the climate narrative interesting again for senior groups. The aim of the meeting was to initiate further exchange of information, discuss joint activities and translate them into local group activities. We had an open discussion about how seniors’ experiences with climate action vary and how their interest in these activities differs. The meeting was conducted as an open discussion.

3. Outcomes

A group of senior activists from the council of seniors in Poland eagerly shared their thoughts on activities promoting environmental protection. We agreed that LAB60+ would provide regular updates on the project in order to promote knowledge about climate education methods among all active members of Senior Councils in Poland.

4. Reflection & evaluation

The exchange format turned out to be a valuable platform for communication activities and for sharing expertise and experience. Due to the high interest and positive feedback more meetings and regular updates on the project are planned.

1. General information

- ⊕ **Date und duration of session:**
- ⊕ **Name of the CoP / Topic:**
- ⊕ **Location / Format (in-person, online, hybrid):**
- ⊕ **Participants / Roles:**

2. Objectives & structure

- ⊕ **Objective(s) of the session:**
(What was the aim or purpose of this meeting?)
- ⊕ **Brief description of the structure / methods used:**
(Agenda. Which tools or methods were applied?
Any specific formats or activities?)

3. Outcomes

- ⊕ **Insights / Learnings:**
(What did we collectively understand, clarify, or rethink?
Any new insights, information, cooperations?)
- ⊕ **Decisions / Agreements:**
(What was agreed upon? What are the next steps?)

4. Reflection & evaluation

- ⊕ **What worked well?**
(What contributed to the quality of the session?)
- ⊕ **What could have gone better?**
(Any challenges, technical issues, or methodological weaknesses?)
- ⊕ **What do we want to carry forward to the next CoP session?**
(In terms of methods, content, or organisation?)
- ⊕ **Lessons learned, suggestions or wishes for next meetings?**
- ⊕ **Feedback of participants?**

Imprint

The Climate We Speak is an Erasmus+ project (Cooperation Partnerships for Cooperation, adult education) running from December 2024 until November 2026. The project is carried out by five partner organisations:

- ⊕ **queraum. cultural and social research, Austria (European Coordination)**
<https://www.queraum.org/en>
- ⊕ **Hallo Klima!, Austria**
<https://halloklima.at>
- ⊕ **LAB60+, Poland**
<https://lab60plus.pl/en/>
- ⊕ **Universidade Sénior de Oeiras, Portugal**
<https://www.usoeiras.pt>
- ⊕ **AGE Platform Europe, Europe/Belgium**
<https://www.age-platform.eu>

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