

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE
CPG project · Activity 2 final result

Sustainable Practices Case Studies Compendium

**How communities of practice act as informal learning environments that boost
organisations' sustainable performance**

Community of Practice on Green Skills for Organisations' Human Capital (CPG)

Erasmus+ KA210-VET · Project reference 2025-1-BG01-KA210-VET-000350632

Coordinator: GBG (Bulgaria) · Lead for this result: OpenCom (Italy)

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About this resource

This Open Educational Resource consolidates the evidence produced in Activity 2 of the CPG project into a single, reusable reference on how communities of practice (CoPs) operate as informal learning environments for green skills, and how they strengthen the sustainable performance of the organisations whose people take part in them.

The resource is modular. This document is the navigation hub: it sets out the methodology, the GreenComp framework, the conceptual grounding and the conclusions that feed Activity 3. Three companion files (Annexes A, B and C) hold the full evidence. Each annex is a separate, freely downloadable file, so it can be reused on its own. Links to the annexes are in the final section.

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Project contribution to Agenda 2030



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Executive summary

This Open Educational Resource brings together the evidence produced in Activity 2 of the CPG project: a coordinated desk research carried out by five partner organisations across four contexts (Europe at the supranational level, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria), together with twelve selected case studies analysed through a common eight-facet framework. The central finding is consistent across every context: communities of practice work as informal learning environments for green skills, and they boost the sustainable performance of the organisations whose members take part in them. They are also far more widespread than official data suggests, because they operate under other names. They are most effective when membership is voluntary, when trust is real and when facilitation is shared rather than carried by one person. The weakest point everywhere is making learning visible through evaluation. The resource closes with eight evidence-based implications that will shape the community of practice model developed in Activity 3.

CPG project: a brief description

The CPG project, “Community of Practice on Green Skills for Organisations’ Human Capital”, is a small-scale partnership funded under Erasmus+ KA210-VET. It runs for twenty-four months, from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2027, and is coordinated by GBG (Bulgaria) with partners OpenCom and SYDIC (Italy), MEUS (Spain) and EEB (Bulgaria). The project addresses the Erasmus+ priorities of environment and the fight against climate change, green skills, and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. Its purpose is to promote communities of practice as boosters of a sustainability culture inside organisations: helping people learn about sustainability, act as sustainable citizens and adopt sustainable behaviours, and guiding managers on how to build a sustainability-driven organisation and measure its impact through ESG indicators. The primary target group is managers of small and medium-sized organisations. This compendium is the result of the project phase investigating communities of practice as informal learning environments, and it feeds directly into the model developed next.

1. Methodology and scope

Purpose. This Open Educational Resource consolidates the evidence generated in Activity 2 of the CPG project into a single, reusable reference on the role of communities of practice (CoPs) as informal learning environments for green skills, and on their contribution to the sustainable performance of the organisations whose members participate in them. It is conceived both as a self-standing knowledge product and as the empirical foundation for the CoP model to be developed in Activity 3.

Scope. The enquiry spans four contexts at differing scales: the European supranational level and the three national settings of Italy, Spain and Bulgaria. It considers formal, non-formal and informal provision, with particular emphasis on the informal domain, where the majority of CoP activity is concentrated. The Bulgarian context is examined from two complementary vantage points, namely the small and medium-sized enterprise sector and the non-governmental sector, in order to capture the diversity of organisational settings in which CoPs operate.

Research design. The compendium is grounded in a coordinated qualitative comparative desk research design. Each of the five partner organisations conducted an independent review guided by a shared methodology and a common analytical template, ensuring that the resulting evidence would be comparable across contexts. A common protocol structured every national enquiry around the same set of guiding questions: the prevalence of CoPs in the context; the sectors in which they are most established; the extent of supporting policy at national or regional level; the existence of CoPs oriented towards sustainability and green skills; and the mechanisms through which learning actually occurs within these communities. In accordance with the result specification, each partner produced at least one documented piece of desk research, and a minimum of three case studies was identified for each country. OpenCom subsequently synthesised the partner contributions into the unified comparative analysis presented here and in Annex B.

Sources. The research drew on a range of documentary sources, triangulated where possible: national policy and legislative instruments (for example, the Italian Ministerial Decree 66/2023), organisational websites, European project reports (Erasmus+, Interreg, Horizon Europe) and peer-reviewed literature. Four reference frameworks anchor the analysis: GreenComp (European Commission, 2022), “The Communities of Practice Playbook” (Joint Research Centre, 2021), the community of practice model developed by Wenger-Trayner, and relevant work of the OECD.

Analytical framework. All case studies were examined through a single, consistent instrument: the eight success facets (Vision, Governance, Leadership, Convening, Collaboration and cooperation, Community management, User experience, Measurement). Applying the same lens to every case enables structured comparison across heterogeneous practices. Cases were additionally read against the four GreenComp competence areas and against the project’s own objectives, so that the analysis speaks simultaneously to the literature on communities of practice and to the European sustainability competence agenda.

Limitations. The evidence is qualitative and desk-based. It is intended to map the field and to surface recurring patterns rather than to measure them, and no primary fieldwork was undertaken. One finding is itself a methodological constraint of the field under study: across all contexts, evidence of CoP impact is

predominantly anecdotal or derived from participation metrics that record activity rather than learning. This conditions how the conclusions should be interpreted, and it accounts for the prominence of evaluation among the recommendations for Activity 3.

2. GreenComp: a short description

What GreenComp is. GreenComp is the European sustainability competence framework, published by the European Commission in 2022. It sets out, in a shared and non-prescriptive way, what it means to think and act sustainably. The framework describes twelve sustainability competences, organised into four interconnected areas. It is not a curriculum, but a common reference that education and training providers, employers and communities can adopt and adapt.

The four competence areas

- **Embodying sustainability values:** valuing sustainability, supporting fairness, promoting nature.
- **Embracing complexity in sustainability:** systems thinking, critical thinking, problem framing.
- **Envisioning sustainable futures:** futures literacy, adaptability, exploratory thinking.
- **Acting for sustainability:** political agency, collective action, individual initiative.



Figure 1. Visual representation of GreenComp.

Source. [GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework \(p. 3\)](#), by European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2022, Publications Office of the European Union.

Why GreenComp matters for this compendium. The desk research found that sustainability-focused CoPs address several GreenComp competences at the same time, precisely because they are informal learning environments rather than structured training courses. Values are embodied through shared practice: voluntary membership, peer solidarity and shared ownership are daily enactments of sustainability values,

not lessons about them. Complexity is embraced because members from different sectors bring different frames of reference, and the exchange itself builds the capacity to see problems as interconnected. Futures are envisioned where communities, notably several Spanish and Italian cases, work on scenarios and transition pathways. And action follows, because CoPs are oriented towards practice: they generate collective initiatives, shared tools and new practices that members carry back into their own organisations. In short, the CoP is a setting where green competences develop together, through doing, rather than one at a time through instruction.

3. How communities of practice work: the playbook in brief

This compendium uses “The Communities of Practice Playbook” (Joint Research Centre, 2021) as its quality reference for what a healthy community of practice looks like. The essentials are summarised here; the full treatment, including the Success Wheel and the Community Roadmap tool, is in Annex A.

A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or passion for something they do, and who learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Three elements define it: a **domain** (the shared area of interest), a **community** (the relationships and mutual engagement) and a **practice** (the shared repertoire of experiences, tools and ways of working).

The eight success facets

The Playbook frames the health of a CoP through eight success facets, the same eight used to analyse every case in this compendium.

1. **Vision:** a clear and shared sense of purpose.
2. **Governance:** the structure, rules and decision-making.
3. **Leadership:** people who guide and inspire, from inside and outside the community.
4. **Convening:** the occasions that bring members together to interact and learn.
5. **Collaboration and cooperation:** teamwork, knowledge sharing and joint problem-solving.
6. **Community management:** the support, resources and tools that sustain activity.
7. **User experience:** accessibility, inclusion and how good it feels to take part.
8. **Measurement:** tracking and evaluating progress and impact.

The Playbook also offers a Community Roadmap that links each facet to concrete questions, actions and actors, which Activity 3 will draw on directly. The full conceptual treatment is provided in Annex A.

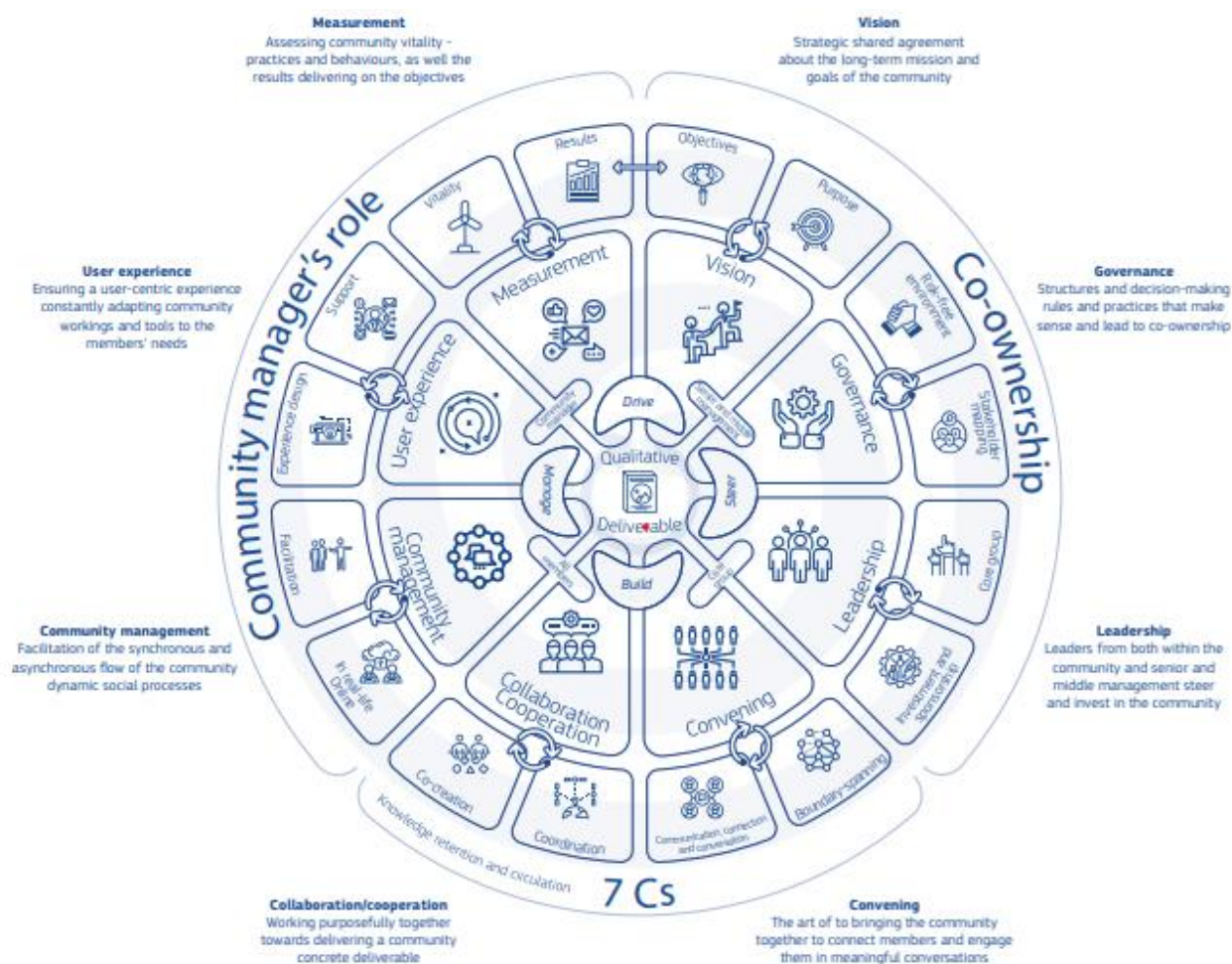


Figure 2. The Communities of Practice Success Wheel.

Source. [*The Communities of Practice Playbook: A Playbook to Collectively Run and Develop Communities of Practice \(p. 19\)*](#), by C. Catana, I. Debremaeker, S. Szkola, and F. Williquet, 2021, Publications Office of the European Union.

4. Overall reflection and recommendations for Activity 3

Overall reflection. Across four very different contexts, the evidence points the same way: communities of practice work as informal learning environments for green skills, and they do so most powerfully when membership is voluntary, trust is real and facilitation is shared rather than carried by a single person. CoPs are far more common than official data suggests, because they hide under other names, “networks”, “coalitions”, “working groups”. The most effective ones form around a real, shared problem, not around a training need. Three cases were not designed as CoPs at all yet fully meet the definition, and they are instructive: Italy’s organic districts, Bulgaria’s chitalishta (traditional community centres repurposed for digital literacy and social entrepreneurship), and Spain’s Triple Impact community. These organic models suggest that finding and supporting communities that already exist may matter as much as building new ones. The recurring weak point, everywhere, is making learning visible: evaluation and dissemination are the

least developed facet in every context, and this is the single most urgent challenge to address in the next phase.

Policy recommendations. Drawing on the qualitative evidence, the compendium recommends that European and national frameworks formally recognise CoPs as learning environments, enable the professional crediting of participation in a CoP, and build continuity mechanisms that outlast individual project cycles, since EU funding is at once the main enabler of CoP activity and its main vulnerability.

Eight design implications for Activity 3

The desk research translates directly into eight evidence-based requirements for the CoP model to be built next.

1. **Start with the problem, not the community.** The most effective CoPs in the research coalesced around a concrete, unresolved problem that pre-existed any community structure. The Activity 3 model should therefore open with a problem-identification phase that names a genuine shared challenge, and should treat membership as something that forms around that problem rather than as a cohort recruited in advance.
2. **Build trust before tools.** No platform, template or evaluation instrument operates effectively where trust is absent; in every successful case, relationships preceded infrastructure. The model should provide for an explicit trust-building phase, ideally involving face-to-face or synchronous interaction, and introduce shared digital tools only once a baseline of mutual confidence has been established.
3. **Design the facilitator role, do not assume it.** Every effective community in the research relied on an active facilitation function, yet this role is seldom defined or resourced. The model must specify who facilitates, how the role is supported, how it can be distributed across several members, and how it is handed on as the community matures, so that the community does not falter when a single champion withdraws.
4. **Apply the eight success facets, do not merely describe them.** The eight facets are not only an evaluation lens; they constitute a design specification. The project CoP should be built to address each facet explicitly, so that the model under test and the framework used to assess it are one and the same. This alignment is what will make the evaluation in Activity 3 coherent and credible.
5. **Embed sustainability in the domain, not as a theme.** The strongest sustainability CoPs are those in which sustainability is the shared problem itself, the very reason the community exists, rather than one subject among many. The model should define its domain so that green skills and sustainable performance constitute the community's core purpose, keeping learning and practice focused and consequential.
6. **Design for small, low-resource organisations.** The partners and their target groups are small organisations with limited time and infrastructure, and a model that functioned only for well-resourced bodies would bypass the very people the project exists to serve. The design must be lightweight and flexible, with low entry thresholds and minimal overhead, so that participation remains realistic under tight constraints.

7. **Build evaluation in from the start.** Evaluation and dissemination are the weakest facet in every context studied, and impact evidence is largely anecdotal. The model should treat evaluation as a continuous learning mechanism rather than an end-of-project reporting obligation, and the OER should supply simple, ready-to-use instruments that small organisations can apply without specialist support.
8. **Build for transferability, not just replication.** A single fixed configuration will not hold across different domains, sizes and contexts. The model should be framed as an adaptable structure that states explicitly which elements are non-negotiable, the conditions that must hold for any CoP to function, and which may be adjusted locally, so that others can carry it into their own settings with confidence.

Closing statement. Activity 3 will turn these requirements into a working CoP model and test it. This compendium is the bridge: it sets out, with evidence, what such a model has to get right.

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6. Annexes

The full evidence base is provided in three companion files. Each is a separate, freely downloadable PDF, so it can be used on its own. Replace [project-website] with the published address once the annex files are hosted.

Annex A. Communities of practice in brief (playbook-based)

Conceptual grounding, the eight success facets, the Success Wheel and the Community Roadmap.

https://cpgproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/ANNEX1_CPG_CoP_PRESENTATION-2.pdf



Annex B. Comparative desk research report

The full Task 2.3 report across Europe, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, with findings by context, the comparative analysis, the ten cross-cutting findings, the gaps and opportunities, and references.

https://cpgproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/ANNEX2_CPG_CONSOLIDATED_REP_V1.0_20260331.pdf

Annex C. Twelve case studies and eight-facet analysis

The selected best practices per country, each analysed across all eight success facets, with the summary table.

https://cpgproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/ANNEX3_CPG_FINAL_12-Selected-Case-Studies.pdf