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CREASSE

PRACTICAL HANDBOOK ON “HOW TO GUIDE COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL FACILITATOR”

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

A Few Words about the Project

CREASSE

The **CREASSE** project “**Creating Enabling Environments for Collective and Social Entrepreneurship**”, is a European initiative under the Erasmus+ program aimed at strengthening the capacities of adult educators, social facilitators, and grassroots actors to promote and support collective entrepreneurship, particularly within the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). Through transnational cooperation and locally rooted practices, the project seeks to empower vulnerable communities, particularly marginalized adults, to engage in sustainable and inclusive forms of economic participation through the promotion of Collective and Social Entrepreneurship (CSE).

CREASSE addresses urgent challenges such as social exclusion, unemployment, and lack of community engagement by building the capacities of adult educators and social facilitators to guide community-based economic initiatives. The project brings together a diverse consortium from Cyprus, Spain, Italy, Hungary, and Albania to design, test, and disseminate educational tools that reflect the values and principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).



CREASSE's overarching vision is to establish enabling environments where adult learners can explore new opportunities for personal development, community leadership, and entrepreneurial initiative, while contributing meaningfully to their local contexts. It promotes a bottom-up, participatory, and empowerment-based approach, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In practice, CREASSE develops key outputs including:

- A Competence Framework for SSE Entrepreneurs (mapping essential skills for success in collective entrepreneurship),
- A Facilitator's Toolbox with non-formal training tools and exercises,
- And this Handbook, which serves as a practical guide for facilitators to apply these tools and competences in real-life community settings.

CREASSE ultimately aims to strengthen the ecosystem of adult education and inclusive entrepreneurship across Europe, fostering innovation, equity, and social impact through collective economic practices.

Purpose and Scope of the Handbook

This **Handbook, “How to Guide Collective Entrepreneurship: The Role of the Social Facilitator”**, is both a pedagogical tool and a practical reference guide, aimed at supporting social facilitators, adult educators, and community mentors in their work with individuals and groups wishing to explore or launch initiatives in the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).

The main purpose of the Handbook is to provide a structured yet adaptable learning pathway that supports the development of key competences for fostering collective entrepreneurship. It is grounded in participatory, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches that recognize the diversity of learners’ experiences and the importance of community-driven solutions.

The Handbook brings together modules covering topics such as team facilitation, leadership, time management, legal structures in SSE, economic analysis, and entrepreneurial competences, all grounded in practical tools, case studies, and interactive learning activities.

Specifically, this Handbook:

- Introduces the role of the social facilitator as a catalyst of community empowerment, entrepreneurship, and cooperation.
- Offers modular content that can be delivered independently or as a full curriculum.

- Equips educators with ready-to-use tools, case studies, and activities to support learning.
- Aligns with the competence areas identified in the CREASSE Toolbox (Output A2.3), facilitating continuity between the conceptual framework and practical application.
- Promotes an understanding of sustainable, inclusive entrepreneurship models that are community-oriented and values-driven.
- Encourages the adoption of critical reflection, ethical thinking, and impact-driven design in project-based learning.

Who is This Handbook For

This Handbook is primarily designed for:

- Adult educators and trainers working in the field of social inclusion and entrepreneurship.
- Social facilitators seeking to promote participatory economic activities in marginalized communities.
- Practitioners and NGOs supporting grassroots or collective entrepreneurship.
- Policy actors, mentors, and community organizers in the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).

How to Use This Handbook

The Handbook is structured into thematic modules that can be delivered as stand-alone sessions or as part of a comprehensive capacity-building program.

Each module includes:

- Learning objectives and outcomes.
- Checklists for facilitators.
- Interactive content and collaborative learning strategies.
- Case studies and best practices from across Europe.
- Reflection exercises and self-assessment.
- Further reading and open-access resources.

Facilitators are encouraged to adapt the materials to their local realities and target audiences. Many modules include handouts, PowerPoint slides, or tools that can be used directly in workshops or mentoring settings.

How this Handbook Connects with the CREASSE Toolbox

This Handbook is designed to work in complementarity with the CREASSE Toolbox (Output A2.3), enabling facilitators and educators to effectively develop and deliver training on Collective and Social Entrepreneurship (CSE).



While the CREASSE Toolbox introduces core competence areas with corresponding exercises, the CREASSE Handbook translates these competences into applied facilitation modules, structured training flows, and practical guidance for real-world implementation.

Each Handbook module draws on and deepens the competences introduced in the Toolbox:

TOOLBOX COMPETENCE AREA	RELATED HANDBOOK MODULE
Personal Competences (e.g., self-awareness, empathy, adaptability).	The Role of the Social Facilitator (emphasizes self-awareness, active listening, and empathy in facilitation). Guide to Conduct the Thematic Workshops (helps facilitators create inclusive, safe learning spaces). Leadership & Self-care / Time Management (supports personal effectiveness, emotional resilience, and professional boundaries). Managing Group Dynamics and Conflict Resolution (focuses on relationship management and emotional intelligence).

Entrepreneurial Competences (e.g., initiative-taking, planning, mobilizing resources, vision).	Competences Linked to Collective Entrepreneurship (directly explores entrepreneurial mindset and action). Guide to Conduct Pitching Events (applies communication and persuasion skills for real-world pitching). Business Model Design (guides participants in structuring viable and sustainable ideas). Economic Analysis and Access to Funding (enhances financial literacy, budgeting, and funding strategies). Marketing (supports the development of promotion and visibility strategies).
Green Competences (e.g., Futures literacy, Valuing sustainability, Systems thinking).	Guide to Conduct the Thematic Workshops (includes content on how SSE contributes to the SDGs). Creating an Inclusive Entrepreneurial Community (encourages projects aligned with environmental and social sustainability). Business Model Design (promotes value-driven entrepreneurship grounded in ethics and impact).



Innovative Social Entrepreneurship Tools (e.g., idea generation, lean canvas, social impact indicators).	Business Model Design (applies Canvas for structured project development). Guide to Conduct Pitching Events (trains learners in presenting innovative ideas effectively). Mentoring and Coaching (helps translate tools into personalized growth and venture development). Follow-up / Evaluate / Report (introduces basic social impact tracking and learning processes).
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This alignment ensures that facilitators who use both the Toolbox and the Handbook can offer a holistic, structured, and impactful learning experience, moving from competence building to practical facilitation and community engagement.

THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL FACILITATOR

Brief Summary

In the field of Social and Collective Entrepreneurship (SSE), the Social Facilitator (SF) plays a central role. The Social Facilitator is not a traditional trainer, but a connector, motivator, and enabler. This person is responsible for supporting diverse learners through non-formal education approaches, nurturing peer-to-peer collaboration, and facilitating the development of entrepreneurial and social competences.

Social Facilitators create safe and inclusive learning spaces where adult learners, often from underrepresented or vulnerable backgrounds, can build confidence, skills, and a sense of belonging. They hold a transformative role, navigating complex group dynamics, fostering dialogue and trust, and supporting collective problem-solving.

Unlike traditional educational roles that may emphasize content delivery, the Social Facilitator is focused on the process of learning. Their role is to nurture curiosity, encourage collaboration over competition, and stimulate reflection as much as production.

They also act as a mirror, inviting participants to explore their values, build interpersonal trust, and co-create solutions that reflect the diversity and strengths of their community.

A Social Facilitator should balance empathy and structure, ensuring participants feel empowered and seen, while also guiding the group toward meaningful outcomes. This role requires flexibility, cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution skills, and a strong belief in participatory and inclusive education.

This module presents the core competences, responsibilities, and practical tools that facilitators need to support such learning environments.

Module Objectives

By the end of this module, social facilitators will be able to:

- Understand the role of the Social Facilitator within the CREASSE framework.
- Identify and apply essential facilitation skills such as empathy, active listening, flexibility, and constructive feedback.
- Design and moderate inclusive and empowering learning spaces for adult learners.
- Manage group dynamics, including intercultural communication and conflict mediation.
- Manage group dynamics, including intercultural communication and conflict mediation.
- Promote shared leadership, co-responsibility, and participatory learning.

- Guide collaborative dialogue and decision-making processes within the group.
- Reflect on their own facilitation style and areas for professional growth.

Checklist

The following checklist outlines the key knowledge, skills, and practices that facilitators should review and develop before delivering the module:

- ☐ Understand the principles of Social and Solidarity Economy and how they inform inclusive learning.
- ☐ Know how to differentiate facilitation from teaching and coaching.
- ☐ Be able to create a safe and inclusive space, including setting ground rules and co-developing group agreements.
- ☐ Master active listening, empathy, and cultural sensitivity techniques.
- ☐ Be comfortable using storytelling, metaphors, and body language to support group connection.
- ☐ Apply Non-Violent Communication (NVC) techniques: Observation – Feeling – Need – Request.
- ☐ Facilitate conflict resolution and emotional de-escalation using neutral language and body posture.

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- ☐ Design and manage participatory learning environments that encourage co-responsibility.
 - ☐ Implement rotating roles and peer leadership tools for shared ownership.
 - ☐ Adapt tools and session flow to the needs of different learning styles and cultural backgrounds.
 - ☐ Encourage critical reflection through journaling, debriefing, and self-awareness practices.
 - ☐ Keep a reflective facilitator log and seek peer feedback for continuous development.
 - ☐ Be aware of power dynamics and how to promote equity and voice for all participants.

Learning Content

The Social Facilitator operates with empathy, neutrality, and adaptability. Their goal is not to teach but to **enable participants to learn from each other** in a space built on trust, respect, and shared values.

Key skills and areas of knowledge include:



Essential Skills and Responsibilities of a Social Facilitator.

At the center of facilitation lies a specific skillset that includes active listening, emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to manage group energy and pace.

This topic focuses on the soft and hard skills facilitators need to navigate diverse learning spaces, support group cohesion, and empower participants without dominating the process.

You will explore:

Setting the tone: How to open and close a session meaningfully.

Listening beyond words: Non-verbal cues and emotional dynamics.

The ethical responsibilities of power-sharing, confidentiality, and representation.

> Creating an Inclusive Entrepreneurial Community.

A Social Facilitator's role is to intentionally shape a learning environment where all individuals, regardless of background, ability, or identity, feel safe, respected, and inspired to contribute.

This topic addresses:

- Strategies to overcome barriers to participation.
- Designing physical and emotional safe spaces.
- Using inclusive language and practices (e.g., pronouns, trauma-informed approaches).
- Co-creating group agreements or "community charters" that reflect shared values.

> Fostering Collaboration and Shared Leadership.

True collective entrepreneurship is grounded in co-responsibility. This topic explores how Social Facilitators can model and encourage shared leadership dynamics within the group by rotating responsibilities, enabling peer learning, and validating different leadership styles.

Covered elements include:

- Techniques for building trust and cooperation.
- Tools like “rotating roles,” shared decision-making, and consensus-building.
- Encouraging ownership of the process through co-facilitation.
- Recognizing and responding to power imbalances within the group.

Managing Group Dynamics and Conflict Resolution.

Working with diverse adult learners often brings a rich mix of perspectives, but also misunderstandings, tensions, and conflicts. Social Facilitators must be able to identify early signs of conflict, de-escalate tension, and transform disagreement into constructive dialogue.

You will learn:

- How to set up group rules that promote respectful communication.
- Conflict resolution models such as the “non-violent communication” approach.
- Techniques for holding space neutrally and defusing dominant behaviours.
- Strategies for encouraging marginalized voices and preventing exclusion.

Examples

Step-by-Step Instructions for Facilitators.

This section offers a practical and adaptable facilitation roadmap. It outlines a session format that supports the development of competences aligned with the values of inclusive and collective entrepreneurship. Each step promotes active learning, reflection, and group interaction. The structure can be applied to a full workshop or used as a framework across multiple sessions.

Step 1: Set the Tone – Create a Welcoming and Safe Space.

- Begin the session with a warm welcome and a brief overview of the session's objectives. Use inclusive language and body posture to build a sense of trust.
- Activity: Story Circle Icebreaker - Invite participants to share a short personal story (e.g., "a time I felt part of a team" or "a time I felt excluded"). This creates emotional connection and empathy among group members.
- Emphasize ground rules: active listening, no interruptions, voluntary participation, and confidentiality.

Step 2: Introduce the Role of the Social Facilitator.

- Use a brief presentation or flipchart to outline the key responsibilities and competences of a Social Facilitator.
- Highlight real-world examples of facilitation (e.g., from community centers, NGOs, social enterprises).
- Ask participants: "What makes someone a good facilitator?" and record their answers visibly.

Step 3: Co-Create a Community Agreement.

- Facilitate a collaborative exercise to define the group's shared values and behavioural norms.
- Method: Use post-its or a collaborative online board to gather participant input on what respect, safety, and inclusion mean in this learning space.
- Consolidate these into a community charter that remains visible throughout the training.

Step 4: Scenario-Based Role Play – Facilitation in Action.

- Provide small groups with realistic facilitation challenges (e.g., managing a dominant speaker, addressing miscommunication, encouraging shy participants).
- Activity: Each group chooses a facilitator who leads a short, improvised session. Rotate roles if time allows.
- Examples of role-play scenarios:
 1. A heated disagreement in a group project.
 2. One participant constantly interrupting others.
 3. A language barrier creating exclusion.
- Debrief in plenary: What worked? What was hard? What strategies were effective?

Step 5: Explore Tools for Shared Leadership.

- Introduce peer-led tools like rotating note-taking, check-ins, co-facilitation, and consensus decision-making.
- Mini-Exercise: Simulate a group decision using the Fist-to-Five or Dot Voting method or any other group decision-making tools that encourage participation, build consensus, and help social facilitators to manage inclusive dialogues in group settings.
- Encourage participants to reflect on the balance between structure and flexibility in leadership.

Step 6: Introduce Conflict Management Models.

- Briefly present approaches like Non-Violent Communication (NVC) and Restorative Circles.

What is Non-Violent Communication? NVC is a method of communication that helps individuals:

1. Express themselves honestly without blame or judgment.
 2. Listen empathetically to others, even in conflict situations.
 3. Transform misunderstandings into mutual understanding and cooperation.
- Technique demonstration: Use a simple NVC template:
 1. Observation
 2. Feeling
 3. Need
 4. Request
 - Invite participants to practice using the model in pairs based on real or imagined situations.



Step 7: Individual and Group Reflection.

- Personal journaling prompt: “What kind of facilitator do I want to be? What fears or hopes do I carry?”
- Group sharing (optional): Invite a few participants to share insights from their reflections.
- Document the outcomes of the session (charters, quotes, visual metaphors) for your report or impact story.

Each step is flexible and can be adapted based on the specific context it is developed, the group’s pace, language needs, or comfort level. The key is to balance structure and openness, providing direction while honouring the group’s unique energy and dynamics.

Final Checklist (after the session)

- ☐ Did I create an environment that promoted inclusion and participation?
- ☐ Were all voices heard and respected?
- ☐ Did the group maintain or improve cohesion throughout the session?
- ☐ Was I able to manage conflict constructively?
- ☐ Did participants feel ownership over their learning process?
- ☐ Did I reflect on what went well and what I could improve next time?

Reflection Exercise

"Facilitator in Action – Building Collective Leadership"

Objective:

To apply key competences from the Toolbox, particularly Working with Others, Self-awareness, Mobilising Others, and Learning from Experience, in a real-time facilitation scenario that reflects challenges in group entrepreneurship contexts.

Note: This can be adaptable to any other key competences.

Time: 45–60 minutes

Group Size: 6–20 participants

Materials: Scenario cards, group roles, flipchart or online collaboration tool, reflection worksheet.

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Step-by-Step Implementation:

1. Introduction (5 min):

Explain to participants that they will simulate a facilitation moment in a collective social enterprise team where a decision needs to be made (e.g., how to allocate tasks for an upcoming community event).

2. Assign Roles (5 min):

Hand out cards assigning group members roles with specific attitudes or challenges:

- One enthusiastic team member.
- One silent/reserved participant.
- One dominant speaker.
- One skeptical/questioning member.
- One external observer (to take notes and give feedback).

3. Facilitator Rotation (20 min):

A volunteer takes on the role of Social Facilitator and leads a 10-minute group discussion, trying to include all voices and move the team toward a shared decision. Rotate roles if time allows.

4. Observer Feedback (5 min):

The observer shares constructive feedback on how the facilitator handled inclusion, communication, and leadership dynamics.

5. Group Reflection (10–15 min):

Use a guided debrief to link the experience to competences:

- What Toolbox competences did you use during the facilitation?
- How did you apply “working with others” or “coping with ambiguity”?
- What challenges came up, and how did you manage them?
- How did the facilitator empower others or demonstrate self-awareness?

Suggested activities and examples

This section presents a range of practical facilitation activities, techniques, and examples that Social Facilitators can use to build trust, promote inclusive collaboration, and navigate group dynamics. These methods support the development of collective entrepreneurial competences while ensuring participants feel heard, empowered, and connected, and can be adapted in different settings and contexts.

Activity 1: Map Your Strengths as a Facilitator.

Objective: Encourage self-reflection and build confidence in facilitation roles.

Materials: Worksheets, pens, markers.

Instructions: Participants receive a simple worksheet with three prompts:

- My communication strengths.
- My facilitation fears or hesitations.
- A person I admire as a group leader and why.

Facilitators can allow volunteers to share reflections, creating a foundation of empathy and vulnerability. This activity builds self-awareness and prepares participants for co-facilitation roles.

Activity 2: Circles of Inclusion – Visualising Belonging.

Objective: Highlight the emotional and social layers of inclusion.

Materials: Paper, colored pens.

Instructions: Participants draw three concentric circles labelled “Me”, “My Group”, and “My Community”. Inside each, they write words, actions, or emotions they associate with feeling included.

Then, they mark areas where they or others might feel excluded.

Debrief:

- What helps us feel like we belong?
- What small actions can a facilitator take to increase inclusion?

This activity can be linked to competences like valuing ideas, empathy, and working with others.

Activity 3: Scenario Challenge – Conflict Mediation Role-Play.

Objective: Practice real-life facilitation and conflict resolution.

Materials: Scenario cards, observer feedback sheets.

Instructions: In groups, participants are given facilitation challenges (e.g., disagreement about project direction, a participant withdrawing from group tasks). One person takes on the facilitator role while others enact the scene. Observers take notes on inclusion, language used, and resolution strategies.

Debrief: Use reflection questions such as:

- How did the facilitator manage tension?
- Was everyone's voice acknowledged?
- What could be improved next time?

Activity 4: Community Agreement Co-Creation.

Objective: Establish group norms that support respectful dialogue and co-responsibility.

Materials: Flipchart paper, markers, sticky notes.

Instructions: Ask participants to brainstorm what they need from each other and the facilitator to feel safe, respected, and motivated to participate. Group responses into themes (e.g., listening, confidentiality, punctuality) and co-create a "Community Charter" to be displayed throughout the workshop series.

Facilitator Tip: Revisit the charter regularly and use it as a touchpoint when addressing difficult dynamics.

Technique: Rotating Roles for Shared Leadership

Objective: Model collective leadership and equitable group functioning.

Implementation: Assign rotating roles during workshops, e.g., moderator, timekeeper, summariser, emotional check-in leader. This allows all participants to experience leadership in different forms, building self-efficacy and motivation.

Discussion Prompt: Leadership as a Collective Process.

Pose this statement to the group:

“Leadership is not about one person being in charge, but about a group taking responsibility together.”

Facilitators guide a debate or fishbowl-style discussion around this idea, linking it to the values of SSE.

Reflection Exercise

Encourage personal reflection with questions like:

- What did I do today that helped the group grow?
- Where did I notice tension and how did I react?
- What bias or assumption surfaced for me during facilitation?

Invite peer feedback or debriefs to promote continuous improvement. Consider setting up a facilitator “buddy” system for exchange and support.

Additional Resources and Further Reading

- **“The Art of Facilitation” – Seeds for Change**

An excellent practical guide for inclusive, participatory facilitation in community and learning contexts.

<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilitation>

- **“Social and Solidarity Economy: Our Common Road to a Better World” – RIPESS**

A global overview of SSE values, principles, and participatory practices.

<https://www.ripest.org/quest-ce-que-less-2/?lang=en>

- **“Toolbox for Trainers in Non-Formal Education” – SALTO-YOUTH**

Includes methods, exercises, and approaches for trainers and facilitators working with adult and youth learners.

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toolbox/>

- **“Conflict Resolution Tools for Groups” – Community Toolbox, University of Kansas**

Comprehensive, practical techniques for resolving conflict and promoting constructive dialogue.

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/search/node?>

[keys=conflict+resolution&antibot_key=XWu9cqP9CxBRQzZY07Zv5iip3l4gMKhsx0kj_XlxdX4](https://ctb.ku.edu/en/search/node?keys=conflict+resolution&antibot_key=XWu9cqP9CxBRQzZY07Zv5iip3l4gMKhsx0kj_XlxdX4)

- **Nonviolent Communication – Official Website & Training Materials**

The official website of the Center for Nonviolent Communication (CNVC) offers free and paid resources, training opportunities, and practical tools for learning and applying Nonviolent Communication. It includes videos, articles, a global trainer directory, and downloadable guides to help facilitators, educators, and community leaders cultivate empathy-based communication and peaceful conflict resolution.

<https://www.cnvc.org/>



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